The New Criterion

January 1990

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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Editor *Hilton Kramer*
Publisher *Samuel Lipman*
Managing Editor *Roger Kimball*
Poetry Editor *Robert Richman*
Assistant Managing Editor *Donna Rifkind*
Office Manager *Christopher Carduff*

Contributors to this issue

Bruce Bawer's most recent book, *Diminishing Fictions,* has been published by Graywolf Press.

Mark Falcoff is Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His most recent book is *Modern Chile, 1970-89: A Critical History* (Transaction).

Gloria G. Fromm is the author of *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography.*

Roger Kimball's book, *Tenured Radicals,* will be published by Harper & Row in the spring.

Samuel Lipman is the author of *Music After Modernism* and *The House of Music.*

Richard Moore's novel, *The Investigators,* is forthcoming from Story Line Press.

Jed Perl's book, *Paris Without End,* has been published by North Point Press.

Deborah Solomon is writing a biography of Joseph Cornell, to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Elizabeth Spires's most recent book is *Annonciade* (Viking).

Karen Wilkin wrote on the "Pioneering Cubism" exhibition at MOMA for our December issue.

Renee Winegarten is the author of, among other works, *Writers and Revolution* and *The Double Life of George Sand.* She reviewed *A New History of French Literature* for our November issue.

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Advertising representative: Kate Shanley, 799 Broadway, Room 237, New York, NY 10003. (212) 477-4905.

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Notes & Comments: January 1990

The NEA since Frohnmayer

The last two or so years have not been kind to the National Endowment for the Arts, the Federal agency charged with support of the arts on a national level.

First, in the spring of 1988, there was then-chairman Francis S. M. Hodsoll's ill-considered attempt to subject the peer panel considerations of grants to an undefined amount of computer-assisted qualification. After an outcry amongst grant recipients who were afraid of the replacement of human judgment by arithmetical formulas—and the resultant outcry in Congress—panel procedures were frozen by law, to the accompaniment of Mr. Hodsoll's humbled acquiescence and the arts advocacy community's open glee.

Then there was the Serrano/Mapplethorpe scandal, in which it transpired that NEA funding was making possible the exhibition of material—in this case photographs—that many found a profound violation of public decency. The Corcoran Gallery's cancellation of the Mapplethorpe photographs exhibition in Washington, D.C., failed to ward off the storm of protest against the NEA, and in the end only succeeded on the one hand in intensifying the battle between conservative forces in and out of Congress determined to pass legislative restrictions on NEA grants, and on the other in stiffening the determination of visual artists and their advocates to see continued funding for the avant-garde. Though the exact meaning of the muddled compromise between NEA friends and foes that resulted from behind-the-scenes dealing in a Senate-House Conference Committee is as yet unclear—and will probably remain so indefinitely—there can be no doubt that the agency now occupies a kind of legislative limbo, with Congressional intent regarding its activities at once vague and contradictory.

It is into this pretty bureaucratic kettle of fish that Portland lawyer John Frohnmayer was thrown last summer, as President Bush's nominee to replace Mr. Hodsoll, who had resigned as NEA chairman in February to become a high-ranking official at the Office of Management and Budget. Though some years previously Mr. Frohnmayer had been chairman of the Oregon Arts Council, and though he had amateur musical interests (as a singer of musical comedy) and was something of a collector of the visual arts of the Northwest, he was little known outside Oregon at the time of his nomination. It was widely rumored that his qualifications, in addition to a strong Republican Party background and his legal training, very much included his West Coast origins and his complete lack of ties to the hitherto powerful Northeast arts establishment.

From the moment of his nomination, Mr. Frohnmayer sedulously refused to commit

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himself on whether the NEA had acted properly or improperly in the matter of the Serrano and Mapplethorpe grants. His attitude seemed to be that, as the whole episode had taken place on someone else's watch, it was not his duty as the new kid on the block to comment on the past. Unfortunately, this refusal to take a position only intensified the difficulties in which the agency and its staff found itself. For the person on whose watch the questionable grants had been made was, of course, Mr. Hodsoll, the previous chairman—and Mr. Hodsoll, despite repeated entreaties from the press, wasn't talking.

As a result of this game of bureaucratic buck-passing, the burden of defending the NEA between Mr. Hodsoll's resignation in February and Mr. Frohnmayer's confirmation at the beginning of October thus fell on acting chairman Hugh Southern, a holdover from the Hodsoll administration well aware, as anyone in such a position must be, that his tenure would be short; indeed, it was announced in September that Mr. Southern would become general manager of the Metropolitan Opera. In any case, in defending the agency against charges of the support of indecent art, Mr. Southern saw fit to take the side of the arts lobby against the political opposition, stressing the role of the NEA in supporting what he saw as difficult and provocative new art, without at the same time making judgments on content.

Given the level of debate across the country about NEA grants policy, it might have been thought that Mr. Frohnmayer's confirmation hearing would have been contentious, but it was in fact serene. The major interest in his sworn palaver with an elite group of senators, including Bob Packwood of Oregon and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, arose not from his thoughts on NEA grants policy, but rather from his agreement that the agency needed more money if it was to do its job adequately. This hardly oblique request for increased funding came against a background of Bush Administration policy, seemingly enforced on other agency heads, of holding budgets flat or even—horrors—of cutting them.

The first untoward event of Mr. Frohnmayer's term became public on November 8, when it was announced that he was withdrawing NEA funding from an exhibition at Artists Space in New York City that was devoted to images of AIDS and its sufferers. Entitled "Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing," this artistically meager but nonetheless controversial exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue containing angry material excoriating religious and political figures for their alleged homophobia and for their equally alleged direct responsibility for the AIDS crisis. Mr. Frohnmayer's initial reason for the cancellation of NEA funding specified the political content of the material; as the storm broke, he changed his reason, on November 13, to what he called "an erosion of the artistic focus" of the exhibition; on November 16, he restored NEA funding to the exhibition, stating that, by agreement with the sponsoring Artists Space, NEA money would not be used to pay for the catalogue. The reaction to this reversal was predictable: outrage from conservative journalists, and, from arts spokesmen (a category very much including those responsible for an editorial in *The New York Times*), what might best be characterized as menacing praise, or what the Trotskyists used to call "critical support."

The fact of a Federal agency head who first avoids taking any position at all on a difficult matter and then, on a closely related matter, takes not one but several positions, hardly promises well for the conduct of public business. Furthermore, it was disquieting when, as quoted by Grace Glueck in the *Times*, Frohnmayer could do no better in explaining his reversal on the Artists Space grant than remark:

> Certainly the last thing I want to do is to be crosswise with a major part of the Endowment's constituency. . . . The word political means something quite different in Portland, Ore., than in Washington.

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But perhaps most disquieting has been Mr. Frohnmayer's expression of what might be called his philosophy of art. In a press conference at the Endowment offices in Washington on October 18, the very day that he was first informed of the existence of the Artists Space exhibition in New York City, he responded in the following way to an inquiry about his own view of what the NEA should be supporting:

> The finest old-time fiddler is probably as much an artist as the concertmaster .... Long needlework is as much a part of what we should be endowing—it is looking for excellence—as is the finest visual artist working in oils and painting in the great tradition.

This view, which William H. Honan called "a broad, populist view of the arts" in the *Times* article from which the above quotation is taken, signals a return at the NEA to the discredited yearnings of the Carter Administration, yearnings which came close to destroying both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Moreover, it suggests a resumption, after the interregnum of the Reagan years, of the trend immanent in Federal cultural support since the beginning of the Endowments in the mid-1960s: the lowering and cheapening of great works of art, the concomitant blurring of distinctions between great art and folk art, and, above all, the use of public support to respond to vocal and organized constituencies, rather than to the reclusive and vulnerable masterpieces of civilization.

Taken together with Mr. Frohnmayer's divagations on the Artists Space grant, this approach to funding presages the ultimate mediocritization of Federal cultural support, and the shipwreck of a once not-ignoble dream on the social provocations of the avant-garde, the inflated claims of local crafts, and the exigencies of party politics. Taken together with Mr. Frohnmayer's assorted difficulties, this approach goes far to suggest that the always difficult argument for Federal cultural support is now becoming, for many once favorably disposed, well-nigh impossible.

From the old New Journalism to the new Old Realism

Once upon a time, when *New York*—the magazine, not the city—was young, and *Rolling Stone* loomed as the wave of the future, there was a lot of talk in the literary world about something called the New Journalism. Fiction, we were told, was dead, or at least moribund. The "main event," as Tom Wolfe famously declared, was this new brand of reportage, which was alleged to be bringing us news of social change that far exceeded the scope of anything to be found in the novel. In a brash book called *The New Journalism* (1973), Mr. Wolfe effectively buried the novel as irrelevant to our needs, and pronounced himself and other like-minded votaries of the New Journalism the right and inevitable heirs to the tradition that had once, long ago, been seen to reside in the novel. The death of the novel—or rather, the death of its status, which for Tom Wolfe is always a fate worse than death—was indeed pronounced with a good deal of glee, and all sorts of wondrous nonfiction epics were confidently predicted to take the place of this once beloved but now deceased and despised fictional genre.

It never happened, of course. Lots and lots of these new-style nonfiction works poured from the press, to be sure, but more often than not they had more to tell us about the vainglorious psyches of the writers who produced them than about the events they were purporting to illuminate. And the self-indulgent prose of the New Journalism turned out to be far too mannered and intrusive to serve as a vehicle for anything but the narcissistic ululations of the writers themselves. The New Journalism did,

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unquestionably, exert an immense influence—but on journalism, not on literature, and its effect on journalism was to corrupt it. You can see the result in every "lifestyle" feature that now dominates our daily newspapers from coast to coast.

Meanwhile, novels continued to be written, and to be read. Many were even best-sellers, whose authors were paid huge sums of money. True, they weren't very often good novels. But they were novels, all the same, and they commanded a huge public. So the theory of the New Journalism had to be reconsidered. Maybe the novel wasn't entirely dead, after all. Maybe a certain kind of novel could still be written—a certain kind of *old* novel.

It was to this task that our leading apologist of the New Journalism set himself in writing *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, and, as all the world knows, it was a great success. Not exactly a literary success, but a great success where it counted—in the market. To some readers, alas, *Bonfire* was an elaborate recycling of the New Journalism in fictional dress. But this hardly mattered. It was a novel of a sort—the sort that had been dominating the best-seller lists for as long as anyone could remember. A realistic novel, complete with brand-name shoes and brand-name characters, and it proved to be a howling success.

Mere success, however, has never been enough for Tom Wolfe. Just like the avant-garde art critics he made a point of ridiculing in *The Painted Word*, Mr. Wolfe has to feel that he is working under the mandate of Heaven—that history, in other words, is on his side in all of his endeavors. He is thus a man in need of a theory, and in the manifesto he recently published in *Harper's* magazine under the title "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast," he has given us one. It is a pretty sad, threadbare theory, but it is undoubtedly a theory. Its point is that realism—the realism of Sinclair Lewis, Pearl Buck, and John Steinbeck—is a literary idea whose time has come *again*. The main argument in its favor seems to be that all of these novelists won the Nobel Prize. (Which is why, perhaps, our greatest realist, Theodore Dreiser, is nowhere mentioned—no Nobel.) Mr. Wolfe does include William Faulkner on his roster of realist writers, but this is mere persiflage. If *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury* can be said to be realist novels, then Tolstoy can be said to be a minimalist and Balzac a writer of fairy tales. No, Lewis and Steinbeck are more what Mr. Wolfe has in mind—and he's right. *The Bonfire of the Vanities* is a politically inverted *Grapes of Wrath*. If that is the standard Mr. Wolfe aspired to in *Bonfire*, he can confidently be said to have met it.

But all of this has little or nothing to do with the future of literature. If the novel really has fallen on hard times—and who will deny that it has?—neither Sinclair Lewis nor John Steinbeck nor Tom Wolfe is going to save it. Mr. Wolfe was wrong about the New Journalism, and he is wrong again in believing that a tricked-up fictional version of it is going to save our literary souls. It is simply going to make its practitioners a lot of money, and leave the problems of contemporary literature untouched.

The revolution devours its own

Strange things are happening in the more recondite precincts of the cultural Left. The tragic, devastating spread of AIDS has sparked a host of militant new orthodoxies that exploit the disease for political capital. Competing for the privilege of defining the "correct" attitude toward AIDS, warring factions seek to discredit each other even while using the whole phenomenon of AIDS as a litmus test for political virtue.

The continually updated list of enemies in this ideological struggle includes some surprising names. We note with astonishment that the Summer 1989 issue of the radical quarterly *October* carries a characteristically hermetic article by D. A. Miller, a

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professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, attacking Susan Sontag for "homophobia, racism, and cultural conservatism" and claiming that her language "continues to ratify the prejudice, oppression, and violence that gay people and people with AIDS daily encounter."

A more unlikely candidate for this conjunction of epithets and criticism than Miss Sontag is hard to imagine. The primary occasion for Miller's attack was Sontag's own bristly contribution to the AIDS controversy, *AIDS and Its Metaphors,* which was published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux last year. To be sure, there is plenty to criticize in Sontag's book. Miller complains about its "unrelenting intellectualization of AIDS," and, indeed, like so much of what Sontag writes, the book really is an exercise in intellectual aestheticism—but one that its author clearly intended to be as radical as it was meant to be chic.

Essentially, *AIDS and Its Metaphors* continues the campaign that Sontag began in *Illness as Metaphor* (1978) against applying certain stigmatizing figures of speech to disease. She is especially unhappy about military metaphors—describing a disease as an "invasion" of the body, for example—and about the seemingly inextricable habit of viewing disease in moral terms: "The persistence of the belief," as she puts it, "that illness reveals, and is a punishment for, moral laxity or turpitude."

But what really stamps both books as a product of Sontag's pen are the accessory condemnations—her claim that scientific speculation that AIDS may have originated in Africa is racist, the throw-away digs at Western political systems as "authoritarian political ideologies [that] have a vested interest in promoting fear," and so on. Clearly, Sontag assumes that words like "homophobia," "racism," and "cultural conservatism" are part of *her* rhetorical tool-box. Yet here we have Professor Miller complaining about "her colonization of AIDS for high culture" and concluding that "from its general conception down to the grain of its prose" *AIDS and Its Metaphors* stands in "the same irrationally phobic relation to AIDS that she alleges an interest in demystifying." Who would have dreamed that an academic radical would one day appropriate the celebrated Sontag oratory and turn it against her?

Miller even goes back to Sontag's celebrated essay "Notes on 'Camp'" (the piece that, as he notes, instantly established her early reputation among the New York literati when it appeared in 1964) and finds it guilty of a "phobic de-homosexualization of Camp"—and this, remember, about an essay that extravagantly championed the Camp sensibility and its origins in homosexual culture. What is going on here? What does it mean that Susan Sontag should suddenly find her latest expostulation contemptuously dismissed as deserving "to be set next to Allan Bloom's or E.D. Hirsch's" books as a defense of high culture and conservatism? (Susan Sontag and Allan Bloom? The mind reels.)

The Left has a long tradition of intellectual fratricide, ruthlessly punishing any defection from current orthodoxy with expulsion from ideological grace. What Miller's piece demonstrates is the extent to which this familiar factionalism has erupted into the discussion of AIDS, further politicizing an already egregiously over-politicized issue. Factionalism is always a grubby business, morally as well as intellectually. It seems especially reprehensible when it exploits a deadly disease for political gain. D. A. Miller is right about Sontag's intellectualizing AIDS; but he is guilty of exactly the same tactics—deployed, of course, à la *October*, in a shriller, more virulent style than even Susan Sontag might ever have thought possible.

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What was the Congress for Cultural Freedom?

by Hilton Kramer

I can think of no group of people who have done more to hold our world together in these last years than you and your associates in the Congress [for Cultural Freedom]. *In this country* [the United States] *in particular, few will ever understand the dimensions and significance of your accomplishment.*

—George F. Kennan to Nicolas Nabokov, 1959

Of the many important chapters in the history of the Cold War that are nowadays either forgotten, misremembered, or summarily consigned to a demonology that places them beyond the reach of rational inquiry, none has been entombed under a heavier burden of obloquy and distortion than the story of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which emerged in 1950 as the West's most steadfast and effective focus of intellectual resistance to Stalin and Stalinism and went on to play a significant role in exposing the true nature of Communism and the fraudulent culture that had been created in its name. The reason for the dismal fate suffered by this once admired organization—the ostensible reason, anyway—is anything but obscure. For much of its seventeen-year existence, the Congress for Cultural Freedom—and thus its principal publications and programs—was covertly financed by the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington. Exactly how many of the Congress's leaders were actually deceived about the CIA's subvention of their organization's activities is something we shall probably never know. (Michael Josselson, the executive director and presiding spirit of the Congress, was the only one to acknowledge responsibility in the matter.) How many would have been bothered by the CIA connection, had they known, is another question to which we have no answer. They were, after all, voluntarily serving the interests of the Western democracies in their fierce conflict with the deadliest and most powerful international tyranny known to modern history. The crucial point is, however, that the CIA role *was* concealed, and when that fact came to light in the dark days of the Vietnam War, the ensuing scandal had the effect of shattering whatever prestige the Congress still retained. More importantly, it also had the retrospective effect of discrediting some of the Congress's most exemplary accomplishments.

The political climate in 1967 was, of course, especially favorable to such a scandal. The New Left, with its vociferous revival of totalitarian ideas, was in its ascendancy, making swift inroads even among liberals for whom—until then, anyway—anti-Communism had been an article of faith. Owing to the war in Vietnam and the antiwar movement it spawned, moreover, everything about the United States—its political system, its culture, its prosperity, and its position as a world power—had become for many people, especially many young people from the middle classes, an object of hatred

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and derision. When the scandal erupted over the CIA's sponsorship of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, it was thus promptly turned into a double-edged weapon aimed at maligning American democracy and destroying the moral legitimacy of anti-Communism. The glorification of totalitarian systems had once again become not only acceptable but fashionable. The media, the academy, and the cultural world were quick to adopt the new line. Suddenly, as if a switch had been thrown, Hanoi and Havana emerged as the New Jerusalems, and "Amerika," as it came to be called in radical circles, was now likened to Nazi Germany. Hence the passion and the vitriol that were invested in decrying an organization that had led the way in stripping Communism of its every claim to virtue. Writers and intellectuals who now thought it wonderful that their counterparts in North Vietnam and Cuba were employed as the licensed servitors of regimes that had stamped out dissent by violent means purported to be horrified that an agency of their own democratic government had taken an interest in launching highbrow journals and international conferences designed to uphold the values of liberal culture and to expose the horrors of Communism and the mendacity of the organs that promoted its power. The Left had begun its "long march through the institutions" of the West, and Jean-Paul Sartre had defined the new political orthodoxy when he declared that "an anti-Communist is a rat." Not since the heyday of Stalinism in the Thirties had so many intellectuals in the West voluntarily repudiated the traditions of liberal democracy in favor of a totalitarian ideal.

It was precisely to forestall such an abject surrender to the totalitarian ideal that the Congress for Cultural Freedom had been founded in the first place—founded, it is important to recall, at a moment when the Cold War was transformed, at Stalin's instigation, into a hot war in Korea and immediately after the fall of the politically divided Berlin to the Communists had been narrowly averted by the Allied airlift, an effort that foiled the Kremlin's ruthless attempt to starve West Berlin into submission. The Congress was founded, in other words, at a moment when the struggle to resist worldwide Soviet expansionism—which was understood to mean the spread of Communist rule by means of terror and the Gulag—was in its formative stages and a victorious outcome for the West, which we are only just now beginning to witness some four decades later, was anything but assured.

One of the great weaknesses that afflicted the West in this fateful struggle was the long-standing tendency of its artists, intellectuals, and other opinion-makers to ally themselves with any regime, no matter how brutal and undemocratic, that claimed to rule in the name of socialism. Capitalism was generally, if not quite universally, abominated in this intellectual class, and one or another variety of Marxian socialism—ranging from the ostensibly "democratic" to the rigidly communistic—had acquired over the years the status of a sacred doctrine. It hardly seemed to matter that the rule of Soviet-style socialism had turned the societies upon which it was inflicted into despotisms of the most extreme and unrelieved cruelty and deprivation. Reality counted for little or nothing where belief in the ultimate goodness of the socialist ideal persisted; and that belief—hard as it may now be to understand or forgive—was a widespread phenomenon among Western intellectuals. As a result, Stalin and his criminal cohorts could still, despite the enormity of their crimes and the high visibility of their police-state methods, count upon the sympathy and support of "progressives" the world over in the drive for world domination. In France and Italy there were huge Communist parties, well-financed by Moscow, already in control of labor and the arts; and even in the United States, where significant defections from the Stalinist ranks had occurred in the aftermath of the Moscow Trials and the Hitler-Stalin pact, there was never any shortage of ardent fellow-travellers, not to say militant Stalinists, among the intellectual, scientific,

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and entertainment elites. At the notorious Waldorf Conference in New York in 1949—one year before the Congress for Cultural Freedom was founded—eminences on the order of Arthur Miller, Lillian Hellman, Norman Mailer, I. F. Stone, Howard Fast, and F. O. Matthiessen joined forces with Stalin's emissaries to defend the Soviet Union as the champion of "peace" while denouncing the United States as the promoter of war. At that conference the young Norman Mailer was thought to be tremendously audacious for announcing, after he had assured his listeners that he, too, believed that "so long as there is capitalism, there is going to be war. Until you have a decent, equitable socialism, you can't have peace," that "I am afraid that both the United States and the Soviet Union are moving toward state capitalism." Among true-believing "progressives," however, even this premature exercise in moral equivalence was considered an impermissible slur on Stalin's noble accomplishments.

Nearly twenty years later, Norman Mailer, summoning that gift for moral delicacy that is so much admired in the work of his maturity, described the intellectuals involved in the Congress for Cultural Freedom as "cockroaches in a slum sink." There was a lot of this sort of thing in the left-wing press in the aftermath of the revelations about CIA support for the Congress. Christopher Lasch spoke of these same intellectuals as "servants . . . of the secret police." Andrew Kopkind denounced them as "spies who came in for the gold." It is therefore worth recalling exactly who these "cockroaches," "spies," and "servants . . . of the secret police" actually were, and what sort of work they carried out on behalf of the Congress and its programs. After all, such figures as Raymond Aron, Nicola Chiaromonte, Malcolm Muggeridge, Nicolas Nabokov, Denis de Rougemont, Edward Shils, Ignazio Silone, and Stephen Spender—all of whom were deeply involved in the Congress's activities—aren't usually spoken of as "cockroaches" and "spies"; and *Encounter*, *Preuves*, and *Tempo Presente*—the three principal magazines that were launched by the Congress in Europe—do not represent the sort of intelligence that is commonly associated with the work of "the secret police" in any country.

The task of setting the record straight on these and other matters has now been greatly advanced by an Australian writer—Peter Coleman, the editor of *Quadrant*—who has written the first history of the Congress.[1] *The Liberal Conspiracy*, as Mr. Coleman's book is called, is unlikely to be the last word on the Congress for Cultural Freedom—it has remarkably little to say, for example, about the kind of culture the Congress was created to defend and advance—but it nonetheless provides us with a readable and fairly detailed chronicle of the organization's history, its publications, its programs, its principal personnel, and the remarkably deep divisions and dissensions that determined the course of its history from the outset. Mr. Coleman, a barrister and former member of the Australian Parliament, does not pretend to write as an entirely disinterested observer. *Quadrant*, the cultural review he now edits in Sydney, was one of the many magazines launched by the Congress in the 1950s—though, like *Encounter* in London, it has long since been published as a completely independent journal. (Mr. Coleman was not, by the way, *Quadrant*'s editor when the magazine was supported by the Congress.) His political views, moreover, are essentially those that guided the Congress in its heyday—which is to say, he is a liberal anti-Communist, or so I infer, anyway, from what he has written. He writes, in other words, as a champion of the Congress and its program who is also fully aware of the flaws and contradictions that haunted its history. His overall judgment on the Congress, implicit throughout *The Liberal Conspiracy*, is stated in the most

1 *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe*, by Peter Coleman; The Free Press, 333 pages, $22.95.

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unequivocal terms in the concluding paragraph of the book.

> The achievement of the Congress for Cultural Freedom [he writes] was in its time to have placed some severe limits on the advantages of Stalinist Russia. Today almost everyone (including Mikhail Gorbachev) agrees with the Congress's once lonely assessment of Soviet totalitarianism, and in particular of the Soviet failure to accept human rights (in other words, cultural freedom). In contributing in so brilliant and timely a way to this public awareness throughout the world in a period of great danger, the Congress for Cultural Freedom was a historic success.

Of the many important points to emerge from Mr. Coleman's history of the Congress, probably the most crucial is his insistent reminder throughout the book of the extent to which the organization and its program—indeed, its basic political orientation—was firmly and irreversibly tethered to the views of the international Left. Mailer's "cockroaches" turn out to have been, by and large, a band of liberals, socialists, and social democrats who were distinguishable from their brethren on the international Left mainly by their opposition to totalitarian rule. And in the end, so complete was this bias in favor of the political Left that even this distinction was abandoned by the Congress's chief executive when confronted by the war in Vietnam. It is positively eerie to discover in *The Liberal Conspiracy* that in 1967, when the United States was deeply involved in the war against Communism in Vietnam and the Congress's link to the CIA had been revealed in the press, Michael Josselson, still ringmaster of the whole operation, "approved [as Mr. Coleman writes] the antiwar positions of [John Kenneth] Galbraith, [Arthur] Schlesinger, and Richard Löwenthal, and disagreed with the Indian and Australian associates of the Congress who supported the U. S. commitment to save South Vietnam from Communism." In May 1967, according to Mr. Coleman, Josselson wrote in no uncertain terms to the head of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, which received its funds from the Congress, that on the war in Vietnam "I agree with Senator McGovern." Which, among much else, would have made the executive director of the Congress for Cultural Freedom an ally, albeit an unacknowledged one, of Norman Mailer, Christopher Lasch, and Andrew Kopkind.

This attachment to certain elements of the international Left had, of course, been fundamental to the Congress's political outlook from the beginning, and although it was bound to cause immense problems—and very quickly did—no other course was probably possible at the time. For it was only on the Left—which is to say, in the ranks of what came to be known as liberal anti-Communism—that eager and knowledgeable recruits for the intellectual struggle against Stalinism were to be found. Except for James Burnham, political conservatives played little or no part in this endeavor. (That some of these liberals and leftists re-emerged, in the late Sixties, as conservatives or neoconservatives is a story that belongs to a later chapter of intellectual history.) At the time, the only opposition to Stalinism that counted for anything was a liberal opposition, which by the late 1940s was beginning to emerge as a coherent intellectual impulse. About this development and its role both in influencing the State Department in Washington and the formation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Mr. Coleman is very illuminating.

> . . . in the late 1940s [he writes] opinion on the Left gradually began to change, spurred on by the Sovietization and the purges of social democrats in Eastern and Central Europe, the Berlin Blockade, and the campaign against Tito. The year 1949 brought the publication of three books that indicated the new mood on the Left: *The God That Failed* (edited by R. H. S. Crossman), George Orwell's *1984*, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Vital Center*. Schlesinger's book, a manifesto of the

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> American "Non-Communist Left," also showed how quickly this movement had spread from the intellectual ghetto to high government office under the influence of such figures as George Kennan, Charles E. Bohlen, and Isaiah Berlin. "Under Byrnes and Marshall," Schlesinger said, recounting a "quiet revolution,"
>
> > . . . the State Department moved in the direction of a philosophy of the non-Communist left. The very phrase, indeed, was reduced in the Washington manner to its initials; and the cryptic designation "NCL" was constantly used in inner State Department circles.
>
> It was the widespread adoption in the more intellectual U.S. government circles of the belief that the non-Communist Left could be the most effective response to the totalitarian Left that created a receptive atmosphere for the formation and support of what would become the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

Thus, when the first public meeting of the Congress for Cultural Freedom was convened in Berlin in June 1950, Mr. Coleman writes, "almost all the participants were liberals or social democrats, critical of capitalism and opposed to colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, racism, and dictatorship. They supported freedom of thought and the extension of the welfare state." The Congress's five Honorary Presidents—"whose names exemplified the spirit of the occasion," as Mr. Coleman correctly observes—were Benedetto Croce, John Dewey, Karl Jaspers, Jacques Maritain, and Bertrand Russell.

Was it inevitable that a serious split would develop at the very moment when the Congress was being formed? Probably. The intellectuals who gathered in Berlin were very largely veterans of the kind of political factionalism that had long been endemic on the Left, and there were genuine differences, in any case, about the goals to be pursued now that the Cold War had erupted into a military conflict in Korea. Arthur Koestler, whose novel about the Moscow purge trials, *Darkness at Noon*, had undoubtedly exerted a greater influence than any other book in winning converts to the anti-Communist cause on the Left, at least until the publication of *1984*, and whose political eloquence had dominated the Berlin meeting, believed that the Congress, in Mr. Coleman's words, "should be less a cultural organization and more a political movement, a 'Deminform' to counter the Cominform."

But Koestler's brand of militancy did not prevail, and Koestler himself promptly removed himself from the Congress's affairs. "The alternative strategy adopted by the Congress for Cultural Freedom," Mr. Coleman writes, "was to build a kind of 'united front' with the democratic elements of the European Left and gradually win it over to the Atlanticist cause." This meant, in practice, an attempt to win favor in so-called "neutralist" circles, which were not in any political sense neutral at all, and thus to blur, insofar as it was possible, the very deep differences that divided the founders of the Congress from, say, Sartre and his fellow-travelling allies. No doubt Mr. Coleman is correct when he observes that "it is impossible to separate this *coup*—at once ideological and pragmatic—from the decision of the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency to assume responsibility for the continuing funding of the Congress." In other words, the ban imposed on Koestler's plan for a militant anti-Communist political movement was very likely the result of a CIA directive.

This overt dependence on the political Left as the intellectual mainstay of the Congress may indeed have been necessary, given the realities of the moment, but it was only a matter of time before it became the source of considerable dissension—and the time was not long in coming. As early as 1955, only two years after the founding of *Encounter* in London, Josselson attempted to remove its American co-editor, Irving Kristol, and replace him with the more radical Dwight Macdonald in an effort to

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appease the anti-American sentiments of the English literary and academic establishment. This was a move enthusiastically supported by Mr. Schlesinger ("I could not think of a better American prospect for the job") and Mr. Kristol's English co-editor, Stephen Spender ("the most amazing piece of good luck and should be seized"), and if what was wanted was an American who could be counted upon to outdo even the English in voicing anti-American sentiments, Macdonald was certainly the right man for the job. But even Josselson changed his mind once he had met Macdonald, and under Mr. Kristol's editorship *Encounter* soon became, as he said, "*the* English-language cultural periodical," with a circulation of sixteen thousand. When the time came for Irving Kristol to leave, he was replaced by Melvin J. Lasky, who had been one of the principal organizers of the Berlin meeting in 1950. "By 1963," Mr. Coleman writes, "*Encounter*'s circulation had risen to 34,000, and it was a *success*." In his *Mémoires*, published in 1983, Raymond Aron described it as "the first, the best monthly review in English." Mr. Coleman also reminds us that, under Mr. Lasky's editorship, *Encounter* allied itself with the Hugh Gaitskell wing of the Labour Party, and when Harold Wilson formed his Labour Government in October 1964, "his Ministry included half a dozen regular *Encounter* writers." Thus, the attachment to the Left, though not to the most radical Left, persisted well into the Sixties.

As for the Congress's role in advancing the culture which it had been founded to defend, that too proved to be a source of conflict within the organization's ranks. Part of the problem, which it would be a mistake to underestimate, was the sheer philistinism of so many of the intellectuals who had allied themselves with the Congress. Mr. Coleman points out, for example, that at *Encounter* Mr. Lasky "rejected an article by Malcolm Muggeridge that briskly dismissed all twentieth-century literature, music, and art; none of it, Muggeridge said, 'will be of any conceivable *imaginative* interest to posterity.' But this meant dismissing the Western culture that . . . the Congress for Cultural Freedom had been created to affirm." Muggeridge's was hardly an isolated case—though, with his customary candor, he was more open in his expression of contempt for the high culture of his time than many of his like-minded colleagues in the Congress could bring themselves to be.

This tendency to dismiss the arts as either unimportant or, as in Muggeridge's case, utterly worthless was emphatically resisted, however, by the man who served as secretary-general of the Congress at its Paris headquarters. Nicolas Nabokov, the Russian-born composer and cousin of the novelist, had achieved fame, as Mr. Coleman reminds us, "in Paris in 1928 when Serge Diaghilev produced his ballet *Ode*. He continued his musical career in the United States, where the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo presented his ballet *Union Pacific*, its first ballet with an American theme." He had become an American citizen in 1939, and worked as a translator for the government in Washington during the war. After the war, he worked for the U.S. Military Government in Berlin, where he had grown up after fleeing the Bolsheviks with his family, and also worked for the Voice of America before joining the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

It was Nabokov's view that the Congress ought to live up to its obligation to foster the artistic life of the West as a vital alternative to the Soviet cultural model, and toward this end he organized a massive arts festival—the Festival of Paris— in May 1952 that lasted for thirty days. According to Mr. Coleman:

> Nabokov presented Paris with one hundred symphonies, concertos, operas, and ballets by about seventy twentieth-century composers. Paris had its first productions of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (by the Vienna Opera), of Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd* (by Covent Garden), of Gertrude Stein's and Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* (by Harlem and ANTA,

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with Alice B. Toklas attending), and of Arnold Schoenberg's *Die Erwartung*. Igor Stravinsky conducted *Oedipus Rex*, for which Jean Cocteau designed the set and directed the choreography. There were performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the New York City Ballet. William Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, and Allen Tate came from the United States for literary debates. There was an exhibition of 150 modern paintings and sculptures. As well as celebrating the cultural freedom of the West, the Festival also made its anti-Soviet point indirectly by performing works by Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich that were banned in the Soviet Union, and directly by arranging church services for the victims of totalitarian oppression.

You would think, if you didn't know better, that this extraordinary festival of the arts would be acclaimed in retrospect as one of the proudest accomplishments in the history of the Congress. But such it did not turn out to be in the eyes of those political stalwarts of the Congress for whom "culture" counted for very little. Arthur Koestler dismissed the Festival of Paris as "an effete gathering," and Sidney Hook went on denouncing Nabokov for wasting the Congress's money right into the 1980s. Unfortunately, Mr. Coleman is not really equipped to deal with this aspect of the Congress's history—he seems, for example, to be under the mistaken impression that Pierre Monteux and Charles Münch were composers—and he accords it very little attention. Even about the cultural aspect of the Congress's many magazines, he has remarkably little to say. The cultural history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom remains to be written; what we are mainly given in *The Liberal Conspiracy* is its political history.

Is Mr. Coleman right, then, in his judgment that the Congress was "a historic success"? On the whole, I think he is, especially in regard to its activities in the 1950s—the period when it made the greatest difference. By the time the Congress was dissolved in the wake of revelations about the CIA connection, its attachment to the Left was no longer politically viable. The anti-Communist Left was itself beginning to fall apart—which is to say, more and more divided in its response to Communism. Toward the end of *The Liberal Conspiracy*, Mr. Coleman turns to Edward Shils for an account of this political denouement—an account that makes even better sense in the light of events in Eastern and Central Europe today than it did when Mr. Shils first made his analysis some years ago.

> Edward Shils summed up the position . . . when he wrote that although the Cold War continued unceasingly, the "moral strain" of it proved too much for Western opinion, including, if not especially, that of the non-Communist Left, which increasingly grasped at the idea of "competitive coexistence" and emphasized the relaxing coexistence rather than the competitiveness. He found the source of the "moral strain" in "the burden of 1917," the liberal conviction that the Soviet Union, whatever its terrible imperfections, remains an "advanced" and "progressive" society, since it has abolished private property, capitalism, and the market. To eliminate that "burden," it is necessary to acknowledge that a free society is bound up with private property, capitalism, and the market, that there is "an inescapable affinity between socialists and communists."

It wasn't only the Congress for Cultural Freedom that came to an end in the Sixties. What also ended, by and large, was the old non-Communist Left to which the Congress had, for better or worse, tethered its fate.

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The rites of editing: letters as sacred texts

by Gloria G. Fromm

Religions—new ones as well as old—are made, not born, and their accents are unmistakable. These days you can hear them in the reverent introductions to scholarly editions of collected letters and in the equally reverent reviews of one imposing volume after another. Consider Thomas Hardy's letters, now "complete" in their seven promised volumes: ardent in its high praise, the verdict on the edition was pronounced—like a benediction—well before the final volume appeared. As one reviewer put it: "Volume VI lives up to the superb quality of its predecessors, and for the same reasons: meticulousness, elegance of annotative phrasing and typography, and easily carried authoritativeness. Hardy may not always have been one of the most provocative of correspondents, but he has inspired one of the most accomplished of editions."

Far from isolated, Hardy's case—with its transposed priorities—invites extended comment. What does it mean to describe his letters as "mundanely inconsequential" and suggest, in the same breath, that this may be where their chief value lies? For whom is dullness—at roughly fifty dollars per volume—a benefit? Hardy's editors themselves, even as they cherish all his crabbed three- and four-liners "begging to acknowledge," and "taking the liberty" to send one thing or another, lament the fact that he remains—in their own words—"one of the most elusive of literary figures." Perhaps Oxford's splendid (and costly) edition is meant to *prove* this to those readers of Hardy's fiction and poetry naïve enough to think that they "know" him.

Unlike Hardy's editors, who practice humility, Alfred Tennyson's make the proud claim that *his* letters show "the living, pulsing, breathing, *man*, husband, father, homeowner, householder, income-earner, worrier, patient, invalid; selfish, self-indulgent, self-pitying yet generous, egotistical and altruistic, introverted and extroverted, gruffly sentimental, vulnerable and studiously self-protective, anti-social recluse and social lion (and, in the old sense, lionizer) . . . ," that is to say, Mr. Super-Ordinary Human Being, a.k.a. The Great Poet. At the same time, Lord Tennyson's editors are careful to point out that "about [him], as of every man who ever lived, much remains that we do not know, will never know, and, perhaps, do not care to know. We do not know whether Tennyson read pornography (like Gladstone) or frequented *maisons de supplice* (like Dickens, Houghton, Swinburne, and so many others) or sublimated his erotic fantasies in visual reveries (like Charles Kingsley, Beardsley, Fuseli). We know next to nothing about his *intimate* home life, about his private relations with his wife, little about their conversation. On these matters, as on so many others, one can speculate, but they remain material for imagination . . . ." We are left, then, with only that "living, pulsing, breathing, *man*" (was there any real doubt

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of his existence?), for the editors also declare—without a hint of defensiveness—that "individually or collectively, [Tennyson's letters] are in no sense literary—they do not characteristically discuss his reading, they are not carefully constructed compositions, they do not often deal with poetry. They reveal no aesthetic creed, no theory of poetry, they conduct no inquiry into the sources of inspiration, they offer no observations or insights that we recognize, gratefully, as the germ of a poem, no speculative delving into the mystery of the creative process, and no hieratic claims for the role of the poet, or of poetry, in society. Nor are his letters egotistical, or even personal, in the sense of expressing emotional overflowings. Nor do they gossip. ('Gossip is my total abhorrence,' he wrote.)"—all of which we are surely being asked not to regret or deplore but to celebrate, along with the "living, pulsing, breathing, *man*," whom these "empty" letters reveal. No doubt we are expected to be thankful, as well, that—in his editors' concise and graphic summing up—"for a man who 'would as soon kill a pig as write a letter' Tennyson does not come off badly."

If the contents of these letters raise the troubling question of how in the world to construe their value, the history behind them beautifully illustrates one of the central dilemmas of most modern editors, one which is simultaneously acknowledged and ignored: the incompleteness of *all* editions, no matter how they are presented and labeled. Tennyson's editors knew only too well how much was missing from the documentary materials preserved by his single surviving son and heir. Bent on "sculpting" his father's "image" for "posterity," Hallam Tennyson sifted and sorted masses of letters, records, memoirs, journals—keeping this, destroying that, and making himself the chief, the best, and often the *only* source of information about the poet's life. His famous *Memoir* remains the gospel-foundation of all biographical work on Tennyson. Drawn from the materials he had collected that became known among Tennysonians by their signifying names—the "draft Materials" or "Ms Materials" and *Materials* (the shortened form of *Materials for a Life of A. T.*)—it has been supplanted in the main only by the large collection of letters and documents about the Tennyson family that Alfred's grandson Charles was the first to see and to use, in his own 1949 biography of the poet.

These, the Tennyson d'Eyncourt papers, now in the Lincolnshire Archives Office, The Castle, Lincoln, have made possible a much clearer picture of Tennyson's childhood and upbringing than Hallam's memoir allowed, by disclosing new and detailed information about the poet's moody, depressed, irritable father. But what Hallam destroyed—needless to say—is still both irrecoverable and irreplaceable. And on this salient truth editors Cecil Lang and Edgar Shannon try to put the best face. "If we had all the letters Tennyson ever wrote," they are brave enough to conjecture, "instead of merely the remnants that survive and have been traced, there is no reason—with two notable exceptions—to suppose that our view of him as a letter-writer or a poet or a man would differ in any significant way from what it is now." The well-known exceptions (the letters to Arthur Henry Hallam and those to Emily Sellwood, before she and Tennyson were married) involve the most important relationships of Tennyson's life, a defect that hardly qualifies as anything less than a gaping hole, even though his editors have chosen to regard it as merely a missing link.

In other words, despite assurances to the contrary, the adjustment or accommodation being made here is not to lack of knowledge but to the absence of material, which becomes an inconvenient circumstance rather than a genuine limit or boundary line beyond which one would hesitate to venture. Though missing letters are the familiar plague of every editorial project, it need hardly be said that they do not always mean the same thing or cause the same problems. For Shaw (who wrote, by his editor's "conservative estimate," a total of 250,000

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letters in his lifetime and destroyed a good many himself, leaving, however, a daunting number to choose from) or for the Carlyles (whose combined correspondence is expected to fill no fewer than forty volumes), gaps may indeed seem much less consequential than for a writer like Tennyson or, for that matter, Joseph Conrad, whose editors have turned up about four thousand letters in all, but not the early—and potentially most significant—letters to his maternal uncle and guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski. Believed to have disappeared in the 1917 revolution, they leave largely unanswered certain vital questions about Conrad's youthful disposition and his experiences at sea, even though other letters to Polish relatives have survived. In particular, the correspondence with Marguerite Poradowska (the wife of Conrad's distant cousin) has served to "fill in" some of the missing years, but while these letters (as Frederick Karl, their chief editor, puts it) "contain nearly all we know directly of Conrad [during the time] he was writing *Almayer's Folly* and still perhaps pursuing a sea career," they scarcely make up for the lost, earlier letters to his uncle. Nor does Karl suggest that they *can*; he merely proceeds as if they *do*—in the way, perhaps, that believers in God adjust themselves to the absence of "proof." He even permits himself to say point-blank that "this edition includes every letter, telegram, postcard, note or brief written message by Joseph Conrad," meaning, of course, every *surviving* letter, telegram, postcard, etc. (which he must assume is understood) found and released for publication. "Fortunately," he adds, the number held back is "not great."

There is certainly no intent on Karl's part to deceive the reader of Conrad's letters. On the other hand, an editor's underlying attitudes and wishes are bound to find some expression. So that when Karl says, in all conscientiousness, that "an edition of this kind can only be comprehensive, not complete," and then goes on to minimize what the circumstances have forced him to leave out, we are in the presence of a powerful contemporary ideal or standard by which editors expect to be judged and which they naturally try to meet. Inclusiveness, or "comprehensiveness," may not—strictly speaking—be the same thing as "completeness," but since everyone freely and piously grants that completeness is a virtual impossibility (you cannot count on knowing what it is you do not know or have), the edition containing all the letters discovered after an exhaustive, years-long search tends to be viewed as complete, at least for the time being. Even more convincing and authoritative are those monumental multi-volume annotated editions that appear over the course of decades, *intimating* completeness, like the Carlyle letters or the Dickens or the Darwin, and that acquire the very look and feel of scripture-*cum*-exegesis, with the sacred texts faithfully reproduced as well as guarded—and sometimes literally outweighed—by commentary.

The current rage for completeness (or a reasonable approximation thereof), as well as for fidelity to the originals in every sense, derives from a pair of related beliefs masquerading as truths. To include every available letter seems to mean that the editor has exercised neither choice nor bias, much less engaged in reprehensible interpretation, and to print each exactly as it was written, or as nearly so as possible, is to confirm the purity, the selflessness, the objectivity of the editorial presence. Put another way, the editor is a humble servant of the Lord's word but also the anointed Deputy. In the past, with less fanfare and ceremony than now, the argument for fidelity to or departure from the physical text focused more pointedly on the writer and the reader of the letters than on the editor, on just how much of the writer's personality, for example, would be conveyed or obscured by the editorial treatment of idiosyncrasies.

Editing Oscar Wilde's letters twenty-five years ago, Rupert Hart-Davis decided to re-punctuate and re-paragraph (Wilde used the dash for most stops and paid scant attention to paragraphing) as well as to forgo Wilde's

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curious habit of writing as capitals all t's and h's at the beginning of words (conceivably because he liked them better than the small letters) on the grounds that it would merely serve to irritate rather than enlighten most readers. Perhaps most editors would have made similar decisions—to remove such inconsequential impediments and avoid disfiguring the printed text—but in its unpretentiousness Hart-Davis's general stance differs appreciably from that of Norman Kelvin, who is currently editing the letters of William Morris for Princeton University Press.

Hart-Davis claimed, quite simply, that he wanted to set the record straight. "For sixty years," he said, "readers have been surfeited with opinions about Wilde's life, character, and work, but starved of exact dates and details," and for this reason he "included a number of otherwise trivial letters because they help[ed] to fix a fact, a date or an address." For the same reason—to firm up the knowledge-base—Hart-Davis kept his annotations "as factual as possible," but also reminded his readers of what some editors today seem disposed to forget—that "the footnotes refer only to surviving letters, and can therefore supplement, but not replace, a biography."

For Norman Kelvin, working on William Morris's letters in the Eighties, the belief-system in full swing carries with it an elaborate and elevated rhetoric indeed. We are no longer in the domain of mere facts and records but of "historical documents" that inspire awe and must be treated with reverence. This means that, ideally, the human—or editorial—hand keeps its worshipful distance. In practice, however, a few "liberties" are unavoidable. As Kelvin apologetically points out, there has to be "some distortion of the original" in translating "a holograph document to the printed page." For example, "the end of a handwritten line may indicate the completion of a sentence even though a period is not used," but, alas, in print the period must be made to appear just as the spaces Morris left between sentences (to indicate paragraphs) had to *dis*appear. "To have attempted to preserve the spaces as Morris had them would have been an enterprise doomed to frustration because of the different arrangement of words on the printed page and the regularity imposed by type; to have printed the body of the letter as a single unparagraphed block, although in some ways a good representation of the appearance of the holograph letter, would have been as much a departure from the spirit of the original as the introduction of formal paragraphs. I have therefore chosen, among admittedly unsatisfactory alternatives, to promote ease of reading by paragraphing." In spite of such regrettable compromises forced upon him by the exigencies of print, Kelvin's ideal, he claimed, was always "complete faithful[ness] to the text"—an ideal fully justified, one presumes, not only by the character of the text as "historical document" but also by the need for a corrective to the looser editing standards of the past. Thus Kelvin can say quite definitively, "In the publication of historical evidence there is no reason for the editor to come between the document and the reader except insofar as the translation from the original medium to print poses problems that must be solved typographically." In other words, the problems are purely mechanical, not philosophical, and the further implication is that everyone agrees on what constitutes historical evidence as well as on its prima facie importance and its inviolability under the right circumstances and with the requisite scholarly dedication. Kelvin himself, smiled upon by the gods, was fortunate enough to have these "truths" impressed upon him by his Princeton editor, who, as he gratefully acknowledges, "insisted that Morris's letters are, first of all, historical documents [and who] brought to the project a clear and consistent sense of the obligations of the editor to the reader and user of such documents."

The ritualistic stress on the "document," the unspoken assumption that in its validity or genuineness alone lies its significance as

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truth, along with the editor's missionary zeal—all this signifies an extraordinary displacement of emphasis and value. Indeed, letters—no longer celebrated for splendid egocentricity (with which editors must now negotiate in a heroic struggle to demonstrate their own suppression of self)—are fast being depersonalized; and in another surprising reversal, the self-effacing editor turns into a high priest, who intones the gospel of non-interference with a text that is said to derive its chief value from non-interference. Curiously enough Kelvin seems to realize, yet never quite articulates, the uniqueness of the relationship between holograph and reader, between the original letter and the person actually in touch with it. There *is* no real substitute for this sensuous experience—so crucial to biographical research—that contemporary editions like Kelvin's are striving to duplicate, if not to spiritualize. And there *are* different categories of "historical evidence" as well as of documents: all letters are not equal, no matter how faithfully they are reproduced.

There is, of course, no denying the benefit to scholars of editions that make accessible letters gathered from hundreds of different libraries and individual owners. Not even in our age of jets and travel grants can a single researcher hope to actually handle more than a fraction of the existing originals; and the need or inclination to do so is diminished with every edition of letters hailed for its comprehensiveness, its reliability, its scrupulous adherence to the writer's carefully deciphered intent. It is to the "user of [these] documents" as well as the so-called "reader" that Kelvin and Princeton University Press pay obeisance while arrogating complete authority to themselves and their edition, to the point of rendering the original letters dispensable by transforming them into unravished "historical documents," copied virtually as is and therefore uncorrupted by "interpretation."

Occasionally, however, an irrepressible letter-writer like Charles Dodgson/Lewis Carroll—*all* personality—will challenge the most dedicated of modern editors with his unmatched originality and output. Not only may Dodgson have written more letters in his lifetime than Shaw, but they were also far more whimsical and inventive than anybody else's. Given his rebus letters, the letters written backwards, the letters with hoaxes and acrostics and a bewildering variety of visual effects, Dodgson's editors could scarcely avoid aiming to be "as faithful as possible to . . . his orthographic gems and oddities," since they are of the essence. At the same time, Morton Cohen and his assistant editor, Roger Green, faced the enormous problem of identifying the recipients of Dodgson's letters, so many of whom were little girls and their mothers. Tracking them down (what with changes of name and the like) required the patience of a saint as well as the ingenuity of a master sleuth, and one feels a trifle *mean* to doubt the ultimate worth of such pursuits. Interestingly enough, Cohen said that when he began the project he "believed more firmly in the sure record of history" than he did in the end, "even as [he] had faith, with Virgil, that *labor vincit omnia*." In spite of his own sobering experience, in spite of the fact that, of the letters Dodgson wrote (estimated in the hundreds of thousands on the basis of the records he kept), only about four thousand have been located and Cohen could not even publish all of these, his heavily annotated edition—in its deft interweaving of biographical, genealogical, and geographical sources with material from Dodgson's surviving diaries—is an indispensable contribution to nineteenth-century cultural studies. But it makes this contribution as a complex interpretive work *that does not pretend to be something else.*

For somewhat different reasons, *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane*, published last year in two volumes by Columbia University Press and reviewed here in June 1988 by James W. Tuttleton, also thoroughly justifies itself without trying to claim either perfection or divinity. Crane's case is unusual because a number of the letters quoted over the years, ever since Thomas

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Beer's biography of him, are now almost universally regarded as suspect, so that *his* editors were faced with the daunting task of trying to establish what Crane actually wrote. Whether they have fully succeeded or not, whether all their arguments for or against authenticity are equally convincing, the collection represents the most concerted effort to carve order out of the chaotic state of Crane's correspondence, as necessary to the "demythologizing" of Crane as the full texts of Katherine Mansfield's letters are to freeing the woman from the image-making of her husband and first editor, John Middleton Murry. Furthermore, the authority of an edition like that of the Crane letters is not imposed from without—resting on a grand conception of "historical documents" as sacrosanct—but won (or lost) by grappling with the available evidence, in effect, by *scrutinizing, questioning, interpreting*.

The keyword, of course, in any discussion of the beliefs and practices of editing has always been "authority," though its nature and locus have undergone great shifts over time. Even now, however, the continuing quarrel between the "completists" (as Leon Edel calls those who insist on publishing every scrap of a writer's correspondence) and the "selectivists" seems to hinge on where authority resides (with the trustees or family of the writer, with the letters in their unmediated entirety, or with an authorized editor) as well as on how it is defined. Literary history—and, in the case of J. D. Salinger, contemporary life—offers countless examples of tugs of war over letters, over those, that is, not lost, shredded, or burned by the writers themselves, by spouses, recipients, descendants, or other interested parties. As one might expect, many of the conflicts have been about the writer's personal life and the details thereof, just as many of the letters destroyed owe their fate to the long-cherished but fast-eroding belief that private and public lives, like church and state, can be kept separate. But however you represent it, the struggle is for control or jurisdiction over an increasingly desirable—and upgraded—commodity. It used to be thought, as recently as by some of the Edwardians, that letters were really "conversations" among friends rather than "writing," and as such not meant to be preserved for posterity but read and then destroyed. "Burn this," says Helen Schlegel to her sister Margaret in the letters that open *Howards End*. Now, as specialized information—biographical, historical, cultural—capable of being transmitted only by trained (or privileged) individuals, letters have become instruments of a kind of power or intellectual hegemony somewhat different from the largely moral controls of earlier ages. Henry James's *Aspern Papers* (1888) defined the struggle over a dead poet's letters in moral and interpersonal terms, and the famous bonfire James set at Rye sometime later—to burn the letters written to *him* over a period of forty years—testified to his deeply felt priorities. But I doubt that even he, prescient as he was, could have anticipated the extent to which "publishing scoundrels" would turn into acolytes and the "business" of editing into religion.

Like most inhabitants of the nineteenth century, James was no stranger to the already existing phenomenon of religion as business or, for that matter, to the more rarefied religion of art that emerged in the *fin de siècle* years. He himself was dedicated, as the *Notebooks* show, to his own sacred personal muse, addressed as if it were entirely at his service so long as he paid both undivided attention and respect. But letters were another matter, always involving someone else, not to mention a relationship, however slight or transient it might be, and creating in consequence ethical dilemmas for both the principals and their descendants. James dramatized such dilemmas in more than one story, changing the circumstances as if to explore different aspects of the troubling "letters" problem. "Sir Dominick Ferrand" (1892), for instance, describes the discovery of a cache of highly compromising letters written by a well-known statesman, dead not long since at an early age. They contain indisputable evidence of venality and

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conflicts of interest during his tenure in the Foreign Office. As might be expected, the young man who finds the letters, a poor struggling writer, is offered a large tempting sum by the very editor who has been regularly turning down his fiction but promises not to do so any longer if he can have the letters. The young writer not only rejects the offer but burns the letters—and learns soon after that the woman he wants to marry is the statesman's illegitimate daughter. The story's interest, from my vantage point, lies in James's contriving to balance the revelations of the letters, which have been suppressed forever, with the deserved fondness of the daughter for her father: the man had his humane, generous, redeeming side, justifying—for James—the sacrifice of the truth about his professional character.

The editor in "Sir Dominick Ferrand," like numerous counterparts in James's fiction, is thoroughly self-serving and unprincipled, one of those creatures of the journalistic world that James loathed. But in still another of his stories about letters, "The Abasement of the Northmores" (1900), the editor has been left out altogether and the subject rendered intriguingly more complex, in duplicate, as it were, and coming a bit closer to home. The situation James projects in this story, though not involving literary figures, does hinge on literary merit, on the quality of the letters published, after his death, by the family of a universally admired and successful public figure. Kept by their recipients, because of the high regard in which the writer was held, they are collected with ease and rushed into print. And what they reveal is the utter banality of Lord Northmore's mind and character. Instead of ensuring his reputation for posterity, the letters ruin it: the close contact tells all and thereby breeds contempt. But this is only half James's parable. When Lord Northmore's lifelong friend and professional peer, Warren Hope, dies not long after, his wife, always convinced that it was her less showy husband who deserved the respect and recognition accorded to Northmore, decides to right the balance and force the world to do him justice by publishing his letters, too. But she soon learns there are none to publish except those he wrote to her. No one else saw fit to preserve the letters of a man with so little fame or standing, no matter how fine they happened to be. This leaves Hope's widow with only one recourse, publishing his intimate letters to *her*, and she is sorely tempted—for a host of reasons, not least among them the wish to give Hope's friends a taste of the treasures they had stupidly discarded. For "[here] was a letter-writer if you liked—natural, witty, various, vivid, playing, with the idlest, lightest hand, up and down the whole scale." There were moral obstacles, to be sure, but "she would fain have flown in their face. If there were pages too intimate to publish, there were too many others too rare to suppress." And she finally solves the problem by having one copy of the letters printed for herself, the type dispersed, and instructions written into her will for their publication after her death.

In this single story, it seems to me, James opened his own little Pandora's box to air the conflict that for him was real enough and for us has virtually evaporated, between aesthetic value, just deserts, and the sanctity of private life, all now called into question but for James still very much at issue. Unlike Warren Hope's, his own letters (whether he realized it or not) were being preserved; and he was admitting, in his story, to a possibility that might well apply to himself—that some letters, intimate as they happened to be, were simply "too rare to suppress," especially when they provided the only surviving evidence of qualities of mind that had not been given their due. Nonetheless, before he died, James also made clear to his executor-nephew that he wanted inquiries into his personal life and the publication of his letters made as difficult as possible. The full story of James's letters and their publication has been told by his modern editor, Leon Edel: how, after the novelist's death in 1916, Percy Lubbock was finally entrusted with the delicate task of selection and presentation. Lubbock's two-volume edition duly ap-

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peared in 1920, containing nothing to offend the most refined sensibilities but also displaying a severely curtailed HJ.

Today, the James family's genteel concerns seem relatively minor, having less to do with substance than with form and image. In spite of the thousands of letters that have surfaced since Lubbock's day, no embarrassing or scandalous episode in James's life has come to light. He seems to have had little to hide beyond what was then a fairly common weakness for young men, a susceptibility that does not appear to have caused him anything like the anguish or soul-searching of others. But his insistence on privacy as well as his reserve in social relations and his strict emphasis on all the proprieties have raised suspicions. Behind all this, it has been thought, secrets must surely lie, just as behind Leon Edel's continued insistence on "selected" editions of the letters, it has been suggested, must lie the urge to "protect" James, if not Edel himself. These are characteristic fears in today's cultural climate; and they are conveniently summed up by Robert Adams in his recent review of the letters of T. S. Eliot: "selection [is] a word that sets scholars' teeth on edge."

Invariably? Perhaps not, for scholars' (and publishers') interests—and often their principles as well—are themselves highly selective, as even a cursory look at the current scene will show. Jack London's ultra-ordinary letters are dressed out in three "comprehensive" volumes totaling 1,657 pages, while E. M. Forster's, distinctive and delightful, are "selected" in two modest volumes. There is no contemporary edition of the Brontës' resonant correspondence but Olive Schreiner's more common letters are being published "in full." Yeats's letters—all seven thousand of them—will appear in twelve volumes, the "justification [for which] must be that Yeats is a great poet," his editors can safely say, "and the more we can know of him and his work the more we shall be able to appreciate his achievement in its entirety," while Eliot's—carefully selected by his wife—bid fair to be compressed into four. Edith Wharton gets only one volume, but it's hefty and offers as a bonus the correspondence with Morton Fullerton, her mid-life lover, letters that materialized just a few years ago to everyone's great surprise. The affair itself was no secret to Wharton's biographer, R. W. B. Lewis, having been spelled out for him in the diaries and various other materials she intentionally left behind. For her way was not James's. She did not try to outwit or elude her biographer. Quite the contrary. She actually prepared a packet of information designated for that inevitable person. But there were limits even to Edith Wharton's willingness to open up her private life to the world's eye. When her dear friend Walter Berry died in 1927, she retrieved all the letters she had written to him and burned them, with the result that the exact nature of their relationship remains unclear. What *is* clear is her determination in the matter; for a few years after Berry's death, mistakenly thinking that a biography of him was being proposed, she took steps to block it. Whatever her reasons, which remain unfathomable, the moral of her particular "case" as well as numerous others would seem to be that an unknown quantity of letters *means* quite literally an unknown quantity and must continue to mean this, without hedging, until or unless what is unknown does become known.

Particularly in the editing of letters, there has been widespread and fierce resistance to the simple precept that what is unknown *is* unknown. Most often it seems to take the form of believing that eventually nothing will not be known, a belief that carries with it the right to know all there is to be known, since—as the shaky assumption goes—knowledge will always lead to more knowledge. The right to know, moreover, not only rests on the authority of a general principle but also accrues from what is already known and in active use, so to speak. Hence the outcry last year from a group of Joyce scholars when his grandson announced to them that he had destroyed both the letters of his aunt Lucia, Joyce's long-

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institutionalized daughter, and the few written to her by Samuel Beckett. His argument—that Lucia was not a writer and her letters had "no literary value," that they were private and belonged to the family—was challenged by the Joyceans, who maintained that any and all material about great writers like Joyce and Beckett belonged to the world, not the family. Stephen Joyce, in other words, was expected to forfeit *his* rights because he had been born Joyce's grandson, while the critics and scholars of Joyce's work, who make up a good part of the "world" they speak for, had earned their right to full knowledge and free access by virtue of the large investment they had already made in the great writer. In fact, some scholars can even claim to speak for The Great Writer himself. When Stephen Joyce declared that Beckett had *told* him to destroy his letters to Lucia, his biographer Deirdre Bair flatly insisted that Beckett had not meant what he said.

Arguably, Lucia's letters might have had a certain clinical value for the psychiatrist or the social psychologist; for the literary scholar their interest would seem marginal at best; and one can easily take the view—unpopular as it probably is—that Stephen Joyce ought to be allowed to "protect" his unfortunate aunt as he himself sees fit. But would the objections have been stronger or different if he had destroyed instead the love letters Joyce wrote to his wife, published in their entirety by Richard Ellmann in the Seventies and setting off an immediate debate over their startlingly explicit contents? For his earlier, three-volume edition of Joyce's letters (begun by Stuart Gilbert), Ellmann had been permitted to publish only portions of the correspondence with Nora Joyce, which made the new one-volume selection eminently saleable as well as controversial. Since it was still only the Seventies, Ellmann took pains to justify the printing of these obsessively lascivious letters. He praised their "intensity and candour"; he pointed out that they represented a "fulfilment of Joyce's avowed determination to express his whole mind"; and he suggested that they had "value as an extreme of Joyce's, and perhaps of human, utterance." Later on in his introduction, he defended Joyce more specifically against misunderstanding and reductive labels by remarking that, even though the letters display "fetishism, anality, paranoia, and masochism," Joyce "was capable" of making fun of them all in his work. What Ellmann seems to be saying is that if Joyce could turn these into "vaudeville routines," as in the Circe episode of *Ulysses*, then we need not take the psychology of the letters too seriously, especially since he was really hoping "to anatomize and reconstitute and crystallize the emotion of love." Surely this is lofty doubletalk about letters that are impermeably private as well as scatological, that have reliable meaning only for the two people involved, the context being their own particular sexual relationship, the quality and character of which neither Richard Ellmann nor Brenda Maddox (the all-too-confident biographer of Nora Joyce) can possibly supply, since such information does not exist. Thus, Ellmann has to fall back again and again on Joyce's literary characters for explanations: "... like Richard Rowan in *Exiles*, he wishes to possess his wife's soul, and have her possess his, in utter nakedness. To know someone else beyond love and hate, beyond vanity and remorse, beyond human possibility almost, is his extravagant desire." Conceivably, such abstractions might be ventured to explain Richard Rowan, that opaque figure in an oblique play, but for the Joyce of the relentlessly concrete letters to Nora, they seem altogether inadequate and "made up." Indeed, Ellmann has great trouble admitting that to translate these letters into "verities" about Joyce is difficult, if not impossible. For they constitute raw information—a commodity that is now often enough given out as and mistaken for knowledge, if not truth.

Most of Joyce's letters, moreover, admittedly and surprisingly disappointing, record an extremely limited and restricted register of emotional response. They have served his biographer remarkably well—by

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furnishing the factual data of a life and career—but not the reader in search of the pleasures that D. H. Lawrence's or Virginia Woolf's letters give. Joyce's genius was far from prodigal, like theirs, and one reads his letters with mounting dismay at the unrelieved self-interest displayed in them. Hence they needed all the help they could get from a reverential editor who spoke *for* Joyce *through* Joyce.

In this respect, Valerie Eliot—as her husband knew very well—was the perfect editor of his letters. Realizing how much he could trust her, Eliot finally sanctioned the publication of his correspondence if she selected and edited it, and the long-delayed first volume has just appeared. Mrs. Eliot explains, in her introduction, that she had begun the research for the letters in 1965 (the year her husband died) but set the project aside in 1968 to work on the facsimile edition of *The Waste Land* mss., which came out in 1971. The importance of these original drafts, with Ezra Pound's annotations, goes without saying; and Mrs. Eliot performed her own editorial duties in exemplary fashion, making skillful and illuminating use of the letters Eliot wrote between 1915 and 1923 to provide a context and a chronology for the genesis of the poem. Now, with the focus on the letters themselves rather than the poem, the editorial hand is stronger yet also less visible and less certain, the brief introduction a perplexing pastiche of fact, recollection, and commentary, some of which is by Eliot himself—from "a private paper, written in the sixties"—on his first marriage and his relationship with Emily Hale, the woman who figures so problematically in his life and letters. Clearly meant to defuse the Hale affair and soften the negative judgments on Eliot's behavior that the record seems to invite, his remarks are presented with the full weight of his own and his widow's authority, as if they were the last word on the matter.

Though by no means irresistible, authority such as this has its sacred, unassailable side. Like Wallace Stevens's daughter and John Cheever's son, who have edited their famous—and mysterious—parents' letters, Eliot's wife is armed with her subjectivity, protected by it instead of challenged or criticized, perhaps because for now there are no alternatives to her edition of the letters. Under the circumstances, there is little to gain from wishing for at least some indication of how the letters were selected. Neither the editor nor the publisher seemed to think this—or any justification, for that matter—necessary. While, on the one hand, Yeats's editors offer truism after truism to validate twelve volumes, and on the other, Henry Adams's editors—a team of high-powered scholars—subtly qualify and thoroughly document every statement they make, Mrs. Eliot simply takes for granted the supreme importance of any and all letters that she chooses according to her own lights. From the standpoint of the "completists," selectivity could not be more challengeable, yet in this case the issue has scarcely been raised, in view no doubt of the editor's personal authority. Without questioning it, one is still compelled to observe how interchangeable editorial rights and rites can be.

So, too, are biography and letters joined, sometimes artfully, sometimes not, often with mutually beneficial results but not always. In the old days of the combined "life and letters," the use made of correspondence coincided with its publication. Both the treatment of the life and the letters included were invariably selective, producing those packaged persons excoriated by Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians* (1918). As the twentieth century wore on and gradually lost not only its sexual inhibitions but also its trust or faith in most appearances, letters—already seen by Henry James as potentially explosive powder kegs—became the biographer's secret weapon. Access to an archive of unpublished correspondence could guarantee the success of a new biography. Michael Holroyd, for example, struck it rich with the huge mass of Strachey materials made available to him in the Sixties, most of which remains unpub-

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lished even now: we know it only through Holroyd, whose densely textured narrative of Lytton Strachey's life is woven or pieced together from Strachey's letters. But the letters *as* letters have no separate existence; they are part of Michael Holroyd's biographical consciousness as it edits Strachey's. Reading Holroyd on Strachey, in other words, requires an act of faith to which we are persuaded by the extraordinary detail of the narrative and its revelatory character. Indeed, I doubt whether anyone could *bear* Strachey's letters in their entirety after the massive dose Holroyd has given the readers of his biography, but neither would it occur to anyone that he had held anything back. When so much is revealed, what more can there be? Holroyd's authority, then, derives in large measure from the fullness of his presentation, just as "collected" letters are presumed to be insurance against the suppression of material as well as against partiality. And not surprisingly, the contemporary trend toward massive, unconstrained biographies has its counterpart in the editing of letters. By telling all—and printing all—the authority of the biographer and editor is assured, the reader persuaded that knowledge, if not truth, has been delivered without restrictions or conditions.

These are quite successful marketing techniques that operate on the presumed principle of all knowledge being equal. But in reality, what drives the "definitive" biography and the "collected" letters—blockbusters both—is the pregnant intuition that knowledge is no longer regarded as truth: it has become capital, as the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard convincingly argues in his slight but potent book *The Post-Modern Condition*, and as the contemporary treatment of letters and private papers—divorced from qualitative judgments—seems to bear out. In the paradoxical way of such developments, aimed at guarding against the "dangers" of aesthetic criteria and interpretation, an entirely different character than the one anticipated can emerge, perhaps even exactly its opposite. After all, the codes of a previous era are not discarded except by blatantly violating them, by turning them—as the prevalent trope has it—on their heads. If the sanctity of private life and the individual is rejected as a governing principle for biographers and editors, what better way to justify profaning both than to "sell" letters themselves as sacred relics?

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García Lorca and his times

by Mark Falcoff

Imagine, if you will, a poet and playwright who died more than fifty years ago at the age of thirty-eight becoming the stuff of enduring legend—surviving decades of theatrical censorship in his own country and major aesthetic upheavals everywhere, including the death of poetry as a major art form. Imagine, too, that he wrote in a language that is not widely studied or read by the major literary intellectuals in Western Europe or the United States. And finally, picture such a figure commanding sufficient interest to justify a major biography by Ian Gibson, a world-class scholar, poet, and novelist, written over a ten-year period with the financial assistance of an improbable coalition of governments (Spain, Ireland, the United States, and Cuba), and published not by a university press but by Pantheon and Faber & Faber, two of the most prestigious commercial houses in the United States and Great Britain. That is the way—the only way—to give outsiders some sense of the abiding mystique of Federico García Lorca.[1]

García Lorca: A Life is, inevitably, much more than the biography of a single individual. It is a detailed excursion through Spanish cultural life during the period between World War I and the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936, as seen from the vantage point of a literary-theatrical vanguard. The principal personalities of this group were Lorca, Luis Buñuel, Manuel de Falla, and Salvador Dalí, but it also included the Chileans Pablo Neruda and Vicente Huidobro, the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and even the Russians Serge Diaghilev and Igor Stravinsky. All of this is set against the background of a swelling social and political crisis, which finally erupted into a war that claimed a million victims, one of the very first of which was the poet himself. It is a drama set at high pitch, brilliantly executed by a biographer who knows just what he is doing.

Though his career spanned a much longer period, Federico García Lorca was in many ways the archetypical literary figure—the poet laureate, if one will—of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-36). He was born in 1898 in the province of Granada to a landowning family of unusually liberal political inclinations and cultural tastes. The poet received a first-rate education and began writing at an early age, encouraged by teachers and established literary figures. At the same time he had a strong interest in music, and might even have become a distinguished pianist had not his parents refused to support a conservatory education in France. Instead, Federico went up to

1 *Federico García Lorca: A Life*, by Ian Gibson; Pantheon, 551 pages, $29.95. The book was originally written in Spanish and then translated into English by the author for its publication in England (by Faber & Faber) and the United States. It was published in Spain by Grijalbo in two volumes, *García Lorca, I: De Fuente Vaqueros a Nueva York* (1985) and *García Lorca, II: De Nueva York a Fuente Grande* (1987).

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Madrid to obtain a law degree—"to have something to fall back upon"—although he lived entirely on subventions from his parents until he was well into his thirties. (In fact, much of the time as an adult he lived with them in a spacious apartment near the Prado in downtown Madrid.) His parents also subsidized the printing of his first book of poems in 1921.

Lorca came of age in Granada during the period immediately after World War I, when the city possessed a vibrant cultural and literary life. Almost from the time he began writing he had excellent critics and colleagues with whom to discuss his work. And as a very young man he met and became friends with the composer Manuel de Falla, who commissioned him to write the libretto of an opera for puppets, *El retablo de Maestro Pedro* ("Master Peter's Puppet Show," 1923). When he moved to Madrid to enroll at the university, he almost immediately took up with Buñuel and Dalí. So in addition to abundant good looks, talent, and money, Lorca had immediate entrée into the most talented circle of his contemporaries.

For most of the 1920s, however, Lorca was what Gibson calls a "private celebrity"—that is, he had not published much, and was not well known outside a small (if somewhat special) circle of friends and acquaintances. In fact, Lorca preferred to communicate his work orally to a live audience. Gibson attempts a description of those evenings at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, where the poet would recite his works to the accompaniment of his own piano music. The man's immense personal charisma on such occasions can only be suggested by Gibson's account; if only we had a recording, even a very bad one!

A personal crisis led Lorca to leave Spain in 1929 and spend a season in New York, in those days a somewhat more exotic destination for a Spanish literary figure than it would be today. The stay seems not to have been very successful, though it inspired a book (*A Poet in New York*) that remains one of the city's more remarkable literary testaments. Lorca arrived with no English and never bothered to pick up more than a few words while here. (Unusually for his class, he never acquired much French, either.) He made few American friends. He was not impressed with the United States, or rather what he saw of it, and returned to Spain via Havana (where he spent three happy months) full of silly, rather conventional European notions about this country—for example, he referred to New York as "Senegal with machines." Gibson tentatively suggests, I think wrongly, that Lorca's experience in New York moved him "toward a Marxist analysis of the human condition."

By the time he returned to Spain in 1931, the monarchy had been replaced overnight by a Republic of uncertain social and political content. After the fall of the monarchy, the fault line in Spanish politics shifted, and Republicans of the Left and Right found themselves at odds, while partisans of the old regime—the Church, the army, and the landed aristocracy—continued to dream of some kind of restoration. But in cultural policy, Republican Spain knew what it wanted: it followed the Soviet Union (or rather, what it naïvely imagined the Soviet Union still to be) by deploying artists, writers, and musicians across the country to bring culture to hundreds of remote and forgotten villages and towns. Initially Lorca was sent by the Ministry of Education to lecture and read poetry; subsequently he became part of a new university theater known as La Barraca, which travelled around presenting works of the Spanish classical stage.

Lorca's work with La Barraca encouraged him to begin writing plays of his own, the first of which, *Blood Wedding* (1933), was a modest success in Madrid and brought him for the first time to the attention of the wider Spanish public. The following year he took the play and members of the company to far-off Argentina, where it—and he—scored a huge success. Buenos Aires was then the richest and most important Spanish-speaking city in the world, the home of such distinguished literary figures as Jorge Luis Borges, Alfonso Reyes (serving there as

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Mexican ambassador), Leopoldo Lugones, the Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga, and the gifted Dominican critic Pedro Henríquez Ureña. Success in that demanding environment (and also in prosperous Montevideo, the capital of neighboring Uruguay) virtually guaranteed Lorca a market for his work elsewhere in Latin America and—for the first time—at home in Spain. The Argentine theater also afforded Lorca his first experience of independent financial success.

Upon his return to Madrid in late 1934, Lorca mounted a production of his new play, *Yerma*, a critique of the Spanish code of sexual honor, which opened at the same explosive moment that the Republican government was disestablishing the Roman Catholic Church. The following year, Lorca's play *Doña Rosita the Spinster* touched upon Granada's restrictive moral and spiritual environment—what Gibson paraphrases as "its resistance to change, its lack of vitality, and its intolerance." In normal times neither play would have been regarded as "political" in the strict sense, but in the context of a growing conflict among Spaniards about the meaning and value of the past, Lorca was seen as distinctly *parti pris*, which of course he was.

By early 1936 it was evident to Lorca's friends that the country was moving toward civil war, and they urged him to return to Argentina or travel to Mexico with the actress Margarita Xirgu, a friend who had created the principal character of *Blood Wedding* for delighted audiences in Buenos Aires. Instead Lorca remained in the capital until nearly the last hours of peace, taking the night train to Granada, somehow convinced that he would be safer there.

This turned out not to be the case, because the city and province fell into rebel hands almost immediately after the uprising against the constitutional government in Madrid. Though he had a wide circle of friends in his hometown, over the years Lorca had also acquired many enemies there. Among these were the romantic nationalists of the Falange, Spain's semi-fascist political movement, who defended the old order. Once the Republican authorities were deposed in Granada, militants of the new party in power—most of them semi-educated, distinguished only by the intensity of their *ressentiment*—went about the city settling old scores. Gibson retells here (somewhat more briefly) the authoritative account that appears in his first book, *The Death of Lorca*, published some fifteen years ago.[2] At first Lorca stayed at his parents' town house; when that became unsafe, he took refuge with the family of two young friends who were members of the local Falange. Even this did not protect the poet; a few days later he was plucked from his refuge by right-wing thugs and murdered at a remote spot in the country outside of town, then pushed into a common grave with other innocent victims of General Franco's pronunciamiento against the Republic.

Gibson remarks, rather dryly, that there was nothing remarkable about Lorca's execution. "The rebels," he explains, "were determined to liquidate all their left-wing opponents, and so far as they were concerned, Lorca was just one more 'Red,' albeit a particularly obnoxious one." Presumably Gibson is understating the case for dramatic effect. For his part, General Franco later admitted that Lorca's assassination was "a mistake," which for him was a remarkable concession. By executing without trial and without cause the brightest star of Republican Spain's literary firmament, the "Nationalists" destroyed whatever claim they might assert to represent all that was authentic in their culture. In all likelihood, before July 1936 the unpoetical Franco had never heard of García Lorca; for nearly forty years thereafter, he would never be allowed to forget him.

Any biographer of Lorca must address two rather complex issues—the relationship

2 *The Death of Lorca* was published in London by W. H. Allen, and in Chicago by J. Philip O'Hara, in 1973.

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between the writer's personality and his work on the one hand, and between his work and Spanish literary tradition on the other. The first of these requires considerable delicacy, since Lorca is generally believed to have been a homosexual. Gibson approaches the subject gingerly by affirming that there is no conclusive evidence on this subject, and that much of the documentation (letters, diaries, manuscript memoirs) seems to have disappeared if indeed it ever existed in the first place. The Lorca family fully co-operated with Gibson; other families were less forthcoming, even though by that time most of the principals of the story had long since died.

Having prepared us, then, for negligible amounts of information, Gibson then blurts out everything he knows or suspects about the subject, which turns out to be quite a lot. From the very beginning, it seems, Lorca was uninhibited about his sexual needs, though he never overcame a deep sense of shame about them. At first he attempted rather crudely to seduce whichever young men attracted him, including the young Salvador Dalí (with whom he apparently had a brief affair before Dalí moved on to women). Eventually he became part of a discreet homosexual underground in Madrid and Granada, and later in New York and Havana. On one occasion Lorca met the American poet Hart Crane in New York at a decidedly extra-literary function—a party full of drunken sailors, where, in spite of serious language barriers, the Spaniard immediately made himself at home.

Lorca also seems to have had two sustained relationships, both with ostensibly heterosexual men—or, at any rate, men who subsequently married and fathered children—Emilio Aladrén and Rafael Rodríguez Rapún. It was Aladrén's decision to abandon Lorca for a woman that apparently precipitated the emotional crisis in 1929 that led to the poet's brief expatriation in the United States. Rodríguez Rapún, whom the poet met through the university theater, was his inseparable companion for the last four years of his life and, Gibson argues, may have provided the reason for Lorca's refusal to quit Spain even when in danger of his life. Rodríguez Rapún was killed in action on the Republican front in the Civil War, and Aladrén died in 1944.

Gibson's brief is that as a poet and dramatist Lorca was strongly shaped by his status as a sexual outsider. On a first reading of the evidence, the case is not difficult to make. Much of Lorca's work deals with two recurrent themes, death and frustrated love; an important sub-theme is the cruelty of Spain's puritanical sexual codes, and the damage they inflicted on the lives of women. (A perspicacious Argentine journalist once asked him why the leading characters in all of his plays were female.) In strictly Spanish terms, and bearing in mind that we are speaking of circumstances sixty or seventy years ago, Lorca could be regarded as something of a feminist. Perhaps feminism—a very old-fashioned kind of feminism, be it noted—was as close as he dared approach the subject of his own sexual marginality.[3] That was explosive enough, and may—as Gibson first suggested years ago in *The Death of Lorca*—have cost him his life, since in Granada homosexuality and feminism were assumed to be much the same thing, and both were despised in equal measure.

It is also possible that Lorca's sense of alienation from the sexual mainstream influenced his general view of society and shaped his politics, which were anti-clerical, culturally pluralist, and broadly socialist. But as the son of a rich landowner Lorca might just as easily arrived at the same political notions through lofty idealism, guilt, snobbery, naïveté, or a combination of all four. The phenomenon of the aristocratic leftist, of whom Lorca is an example, has been extremely common in Spain and Latin America during the twentieth century. But

3 Apparently Lorca toyed periodically with addressing the subject of his own sexual concerns more directly, but none of the manuscripts were completed. Gibson makes reference to several; one assumes that in time these fragments will be published.

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it is important to recognize a critical distinction: characteristically, such a person is willing to make radical statements to the press, or even to sympathize publicly with the Soviet Union, but is generally reluctant to join the Communist party or its front organizations.

On the other hand, it is at least possible to entertain another point of view. There need be no necessary and inevitable relationship between Lorca's politics and his personal psychology. Indeed, the established social order in Spain that Lorca so often vilified in flip remarks to journalists was the very same that provided him with a protected berth as a son of the *haute bourgeoisie*, and insulated him to some extent from the humiliation of being different from other men. From that (admittedly limited) perspective, under slightly different family circumstances and with other cultural interests he might have turned out to be a fascist, as did his contemporary José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of the Falange, possible closet homosexual, and—interestingly enough—the subject of another biography by Ian Gibson which, unfortunately, has so far appeared only in Spain.[4] The two men were not friends—though they knew each other—and both came to the same end; Primo de Rivera was shot in the Republican zone at about the same time that his followers were dispatching Lorca in Granada.

Evidently, at times the poet was a frustrated and unhappy man, though this does not seem to have prevented him from having a warm relationship with his family and many satisfying platonic friendships with a huge circle of talented and attractive men and women. Nor did it prevent him from achieving high literary and artistic distinction, both at home and abroad. The fact is that we owe Lorca's work to his special circumstances; his achievement cannot be separated from his private drama.

4 *En busca de José Antonio* ("In Search of José Antonio"), by Ian Gibson, was published in Barcelona by Planeta in 1980.

The matter of Lorca's special place in Spanish culture is even more interesting. As in all countries situated on the immediate periphery of Western culture, Spanish intellectuals have debated since at least the eighteenth century the value of their vernacular traditions in relation to the more sophisticated standards set by a foreign metropolis. In the case of Spain, the model of civilization for the vanguard had always been France and specifically Paris—indeed, during the reign of Charles III (1759-88) there was a serious attempt to reshape Spanish society, culture, and institutions along Bourbon lines, provoking much popular resistance. The subsequent war to expel Napoleon from the peninsula in 1812-14 was as much a *Kulturkampf* as a struggle for self-determination, and—if an inconvenient truth be told—it is not clear even now whether the Spanish people would not have done better to lose that war rather than win it.

In the same year Lorca was born, Spain lost both Cuba and the Philippines in a brief, humiliating contest with the United States. The defeat—"the disaster," as Spaniards always called it—provoked an extensive cultural soul-searching by the younger members of the literary establishment. Eventually, the Generation of 1898, as it became known, split in two. One faction attributed Spain's defeat to its refusal to come to terms with the modern world; the other insisted that the humiliation of 1898 was the consequence of Spain's abandonment of its vernacular tradition. This second group believed that Spain's problem was precisely its uncritical worship of the modern, what the traditionalist Right considered the false gods of materialism, secularism, and progress. Characteristically, the two most outstanding figures of the movement, José Ortega y Gasset and Ramiro de Maeztu, ended up on opposite sides of the barricade in the Civil War nearly forty years later.

Lorca stands precisely at the point where these two diverging roads from 1898 finally loop around and cross. His work (and also his personal style) was firmly rooted in the

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vernacular traditions of his region, so much so that Jorge Luis Borges once referred to him rather disdainfully as "a professional Andalusian." But Borges missed a crucial point—namely, that Lorca was an Andalusian with a difference. Rather than cynically exploiting the folkloric aspects of his region for wide-eyed Argentines (or Spaniards from other parts of his own country), he approached them critically. If he was an Andalusian through and through, it was from a sharply "revisionist" perspective.

From the ninth to the fifteenth century, Granada was the place where Eastern and Western cultures converged. In 1492 the last of a long series of military campaigns had defeated the Muslim caliphate, compelling both the Moors and Granada's large Jewish community to convert to Roman Catholicism or to quit the country altogether. Paradoxically, what had made Granada a unique corner of Spanish culture was precisely its synthesis of Moorish and Jewish elements, but, in attempting to justify the Reconquest, four subsequent centuries of Spanish historiography denied or minimized the value of both.

Lorca was deeply troubled about this. As he said in a newspaper interview a few weeks before the outbreak of the Civil War, the Reconquest—which, after all, can be legitimately regarded as the epoch of Spain's creation as a modern nation—was

> a disastrous event, even though they may say the opposite in the schools. An admirable civilization, and a poetry, astronomy, architecture and sensitivity unique in the world—all were lost, to give way to an impoverished, cowed city, a "miser's paradise."

No doubt the remark romanticizes to a fault the Moorish kingdom, and cruelly shortchanges the achievements of Spanish Catholic culture, but it does at least go well beyond the calculated folkloricism, the cynical exploitation of "local color" which is all that most foreigners (and indeed, many Spaniards) ever saw of the region. Had Lorca been *that* kind of professional Andalusian, there would be nothing to distinguish him from dozens of mediocre contemporaries. What the poet had in mind was what Gibson calls "a Granada that would preserve the best of the past but live firmly rooted in the modern age—what for Lorca was 'a universal Granadism.'" This concept is crucial to understanding Lorca's importance—he represents (along with Buñuel, Dalí, and de Falla) an attempt to bridge traditional culture in Spain with the avant-garde. His work, and theirs, seems to be saying, Yes, we are Spaniards, but we have found a way to reconjugate our national culture in modern, universal terms.

The issue is not a trivial one for writers in "underdeveloped" countries, which among other things may explain why Republican Madrid attracted an unusually large number of first-rate Latin American writers. Whether Lorca really accomplished an enduring synthesis of the traditional and the ultra-modern is, of course, another question. Some of the themes that he addressed in his plays, daring at the time, seem flat and dated today; for example, when *Yerma* was restaged in Madrid in the early 1980s for the first time since the Civil War, the producers felt they could approximate its original shock value only by introducing extensive male and female nudity. But at any rate, Lorca helped his own and several subsequent literary generations to break out of sterile, repetitive molds of expression and sensibility and to take Spain beyond the ethos of *Carmen*, bullfights, and castanets.

Lorca also represents a social archetype: the artist as a public—as opposed to a political—figure. In Republican Spain the line between the political classes and the community of letters, broadly construed, was never very clear-cut; in fact, many ministers and government authorities, not to mention ambassadors, were intellectuals (or pretended to be). But Lorca embodies something a bit different—the poet who attempts to shape political discourse without involving himself in the day-to-day business of government. The combination of lofty moral authority and freedom from political

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responsibility is, evidently, an irresistible cocktail for intellectuals the world over, so we can hardly be surprised that even so likable a man as Lorca succumbed to the temptation. Some of his political statements, while often silly or embarrassing, were harmless enough—except to himself. His vaunted challenges to traditional authority—particularly to the police and the military, as exemplified by his "Ballad of the Civil Guard," which he was imprudent enough to read at a public recital a few days before the outbreak of the Civil War—helped to mark him as an enemy to be liquidated when the opportunity presented itself.

One finishes Gibson's book wondering what might have happened to Lorca had he remained in Madrid in July 1936 instead of taking the night train to Granada. Had he survived the war, he would probably have been forced into exile after the defeat of the Republic three years later, perhaps to Argentina or Mexico. If he followed the pattern of so many other distinguished literary exiles, after lingering for a dozen or so years in mediocre intellectual (and economic) circumstances, he might well have been lured to the United States—to Austin, Albuquerque, or San Diego, poor man!—to teach Spanish literature to dim American college students who would have had no sense whatever of the immense literary richness thrown in their path. In the late Sixties, he might well have chosen to return to Spain for retirement; by that time, the Franco government was relatively forgiving, and demanded no *auto-da-fé* in exchange for restoring one's passport.

By then he would, of course, have been a shadow of the charismatic personality that had departed some three decades before. Certainly there would have been no legend of Lorca and no legion of scholars and critics to tend it—no "Lorca International," as Gibson calls it. Perhaps there would have been new, qualitative advances in his drama, but it would have been difficult to find audiences for his plays, which in any case would have begun to acquire a certain artificiality as their author became increasingly detached from the culture and society from which he drew sustenance. As for his poetry—well, we all know what has happened to poetry.

There is something about Lorca's life and death that suggests a unified whole—a brief existence, intensely experienced, overflowing into supreme accomplishment in art, and then, suddenly, at its peak, literally snuffed out by the forces of darkness. Can this perfect circle hold the key to the enduring fascination exercised by the man and his work? Lorca's mystique may owe almost as much to his identification with the Second Republic, whose goal was to modernize a backward country without forfeiting its identity. The devisive issues of Lorca's Spain—secularization of education, separation of church and state, agrarian reform—seem inconceivably remote today, but this broader question—how to change while also remaining the same—continues to confront every society on the periphery of Western culture and, to some extent, those within it as well.

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The collapse of the center: the humanities at Williams

by Roger Kimball

Live with your century, but do not be its creature; render to your contemporaries what they need, not what they praise.
—Friedrich Schiller

Anyone acquainted with recent developments in the academy will have noticed that a subtle but disturbing change has taken place in those protected purlieus. Trends that only a few years ago would have been considered radical challenges to the established order are now pursued as a matter of course—by the established order itself. Increasingly, the political and educational ambitions of yesterday's academic renegades appear as items on the agenda of today's powers that be. From the assault on the traditional curriculum to the institutionalization of radical feminism and other overtly politicized movements, the radical menu of left-wing educational transformation is now regularly served up as if it were simply the conventional fare—which, alas, is precisely what it is coming to be at many institutions.

It would be difficult to imagine a more revealing illustration of this new academic establishment at work than the one Williams College offered at its two-day fall convocation ceremonies in September of last year. The festivities at the venerable liberal-arts college in Williamstown, Massachusetts, were held not only to mark the beginning of term and confer various academic prizes and honors but also to inaugurate the college's new Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The highlight of the event was an evening panel discussion devoted to the question, "Crisis in the Humanities?" Members of the panel included Houston A. Baker, Jr., professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania; the renowned deconstructionist Jacques Derrida, who has appointments at several institutions; Werner Gundersheimer, a specialist in Renaissance European history who was recently appointed director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.; Gertrude Himmelfarb, professor emeritus of history at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; and E. D. Hirsch, Jr., of *Cultural Literacy* fame, who is a professor of English at the University of Virginia. These five—who were awarded honorary degrees at the convocation ceremonies the following day—were joined by two members of the Williams faculty: Mark C. Taylor, professor of religion and director of the Williams Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences, who acted as moderator for the panel, and Lynda Bundtzen, professor of English and chair of Williams's women's studies program.

What made this event noteworthy was not its novelty; similar panels have been convened at major universities for years now. Nor was the opening of a new humanities center much news; there are already some three hundred such institutions at colleges and universities across the country. If Williams has only now acquired a humani-

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ties center, it is because only recently has the interdisciplinary humanities center entrenched itself securely enough in the academy to be an attractive ornament for a small, mainstream liberal-arts college. No, the inauguration of a humanities center and a debate over the state of the humanities at Williams College are important not so much for their own sake as for what they tell us about the progress that academic radicalism has made in transforming itself into the new academic establishment.

Nearly a thousand people—most of them students—crowded into Williams's elegant Chapin Hall to listen to the panel debate. Professor Taylor introduced the discussion by recalling the question mark that formed part of the title: Yes, he said, we've all heard a great deal about the humanities lately, but is there really a crisis? And if so, what is it? Professor Taylor said he doubted that the popular perception that the humanities are in trouble was at all accurate. But he had no doubt about where to place the blame for that mistaken perception. In his view, the widespread sense that the humanities are in a state of crisis has largely "grown out of an extraordinary attack on recent tendencies in humanistic studies that had been carried out during the Reagan years and is continuing in the Bush Administration."

Whether Professor Taylor actually believed that the Reagan and Bush administrations themselves had undertaken or otherwise abetted this alleged attack, or whether he thought they merely provided a climate conducive to attacking the humanities, was never made terribly clear. What was clear, however, was his deep antipathy to the voices that "are calling us back to what they regard as the traditional values of the Western humanistic tradition." Professor Taylor did not mention any names, but it was not long before the specters of William Bennett (the former Secretary of Education), Lynne Cheney (the current director of the National Endowment for the Humanities), and Allan Bloom (the author of *The Closing of the American Mind*) loomed large and threatening in the wings. For Professor Taylor, if there is a crisis in the humanities today, it has arisen not from the way the humanities are pursued at our colleges and universities—where, we were given to understand, things couldn't be better—but precisely from efforts by people like Bennett, Cheney, and Bloom to resuscitate those "traditional values of the Western humanistic tradition."

Obviously unhappy at the prospect of such "traditional values" being reinstated, Professor Taylor went on to confide that the humanities are "inextricably bound up with philosophical and political traditions that many in today's world find problematic." While he did not bother to elaborate on this statement, it is worth asking what it might mean that a professor of religion and director of a center for the study of the humanities and social sciences should think that the humanities are inextricably linked to traditions that "many" find "problematic." Which philosophical and political traditions, exactly, does he have in mind? Just who are the "many" taking issue with these traditions? And what does the euphemistic word "problematic" imply? Again, Professor Taylor did not offer specifics. But his invocation of the legacy of Greece and Rome as the ultimate source of the humanistic tradition made it clear that he meant the philosophical and political traditions of the West—traditions that, in philosophy, developed the ideals of truth, objectivity, and scholarly disinterestedness, and that, in politics, are responsible for the rise of liberal democratic society. The "many" who dispute this legacy are of course Professor Taylor and his colleagues—that is, precisely those academics charged with teaching and preserving the humanities and the traditions upon which they are based.

In brief, then, this was Professor Taylor's message: Recent attacks on the humanities have been misplaced; indeed, the humanities today are thriving, but there remains the unfortunate detail that the philosophical and political ideas that have traditionally supported the humanities are essentially racist, sexist, and elitist, and so they must be

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scrapped for a more enlightened set of ideas. The institutional corollary of all this was unexpressed but also fairly obvious: More "research" is needed to discern and foster such enlightened alternatives, so please, all you anti-intellectual, unenlightened people who continue to labor under the prejudices of an outmoded tradition, please keep sending your children to college to be disabused of such prejudices, and keep supporting us post-humanist humanists with grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and other governmental institutions. Given such an understanding of the humanities, it was little wonder that Professor Taylor should conclude his remarks by reminding his audience that he considers the "stakes" in the controversy over the humanities to be primarily "social and political." Who could doubt it?

Instead of offering prepared remarks on the large issues that Professor Taylor had broached in his introduction, members of the panel were asked to respond individually to questions that had been previously formulated by individuals from the Williams community and that Professor Taylor addressed to each of the panelists in turn. Some of the questions, and certainly some of the responses, tended to wander off the announced topic of the evening's discussion; but, taken together, some half dozen of the exchanges provided a veritable catalogue of the chief issues that define the controversy over the humanities today.

The first question, addressed to Professor Bundtzen, concerned the issue of the canon: How should it be defined and what is its importance for contemporary debate? Professor Bundtzen began conventionally enough by alluding to Matthew Arnold. Arnold has been widely invoked in recent discussions of the canon, she noted, and indeed the traditional idea of the canon could be summed up in Arnoldian terms as "masterpieces, the great works, those works deemed as of lasting value and significance, important for critics to return to again and again." But it soon became clear that Professor Bundtzen had little patience with this whole idea of the canon, at least as it has been traditionally defined. For who occupies its ranks? People like Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton—those whom Professor Bundtzen repeatedly and contemptuously referred to as "the big guys" and "the big names": the likes of Picasso, Matisse, and Rembrandt in painting, Nietzsche and Kant in philosophy. "It's like having a big list of names," Professor Bundtzen complained, working up to her main point: "The names, I hope you all noticed, are . . . *men*. They're white men; they're Western European . . . . [The canon is] the list of the white men who have created Western culture." One wasn't sure which she thought was worse, the creators or their creations. Professor Bundtzen went on to support the "feminist contention" that "surely there must be some women somewhere who did something that might be deemed of interpretive significance."

Echoing many other academic feminists, Professor Bundtzen went on to make a more radical point. "There is a way in which there is a canonization of unique genius," she told us, "and genius as it's attached to the male imagination: *Their* problems, *their* desires, what *they* love and *they* think is important, and *their* narratives and *their* stories, *their* events, *their* history, the way in which they paint their often female subjects." In other words, it's not only the predominance of men in the canon that Professor Bundtzen objected to, but also the very criteria for inclusion in the canon. The whole idea of "unique genius," for example, seemed specifically "male" to her, as did the problems and aspirations that were expressed in works created by men. The possibility that there might be something *human* in these aspirations and achievements, something that transcended the contingency of gender, was rejected out of hand.

Professor Bundtzen's comments were nothing more than a commonplace expression of commonplace feminist sentiments; but of course they are disturbing precisely *because* they have become commonplace. It is a measure of the triumph of radical feminism

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in the academy that ideas that were considered extremely idiosyncratic only a few years ago are these days taken for granted and repeated as gospel by professors everywhere. Thus, even at an elite liberal-arts college like Williams, once considered an epitome of the small but rigorous traditional college, we find faculty members propagating the notion that the "value" placed on "unique genius" in our culture is somehow distinctively "male" and therefore subject to feminist dismantling.

Later in the evening, when the discussion returned to the question of the canon, Professor Bundtzen provided additional evidence of the extent to which she has absorbed conventional feminist ideology. Elaborating on her point about the essentially masculine nature of traditional aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual criteria, she spoke of a "counter-canon" of women authors and questioned the high esteem that has been accorded to certain sorts of creative endeavor but has been withheld from others. "When the Western male tradition was canonized," she informed us,

> certain values about individual genius were canonized, and mastery, and transcendence; and in other words the canonization of women authors [might be read] as a counter-canonization of different values . . . . [It would be] an enrichment of the canon overall to have a discordant woman's voice saying "I'm not creating this poem for eternity," "I don't want to celebrate transcendent truths, I want to celebrate the little things in women's lives . . . the small nurturing things that women do."

In the feminist reconstruction of the canon that Professor Bundtzen envisioned, then, allegedly "male" values like individual genius, transcendence, mastery, and truth must be put aside to make room for allegedly "female" values and the "discordant woman's voice" undertaking to champion "the small nurturing things that women do."

We shall return to Professor Bundtzen and her discordant woman's voice. But let us first consider the responses of some of the other panelists. The first question that was put to Professor Hirsch concerned the relationship between his book *Cultural Literacy* and Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*. *Cultural Literacy* had been widely associated with the spirit of *The Closing of the American Mind*; how, if at all, would Professor Hirsch distinguish his position from Bloom's? And what does the enthusiastic response to their books tell us about the educated public's attitude toward the educational mission of our colleges today?

These questions were tailor-made for Professor Hirsch. Ever since the raging success of *Cultural Literacy* brought him not only fame but also the uncomfortable label of "conservative," he has taken every opportunity to shake off the label and to attempt to ingratiate himself with the academic Left. It was hardly surprising, then, that he should have responded gratefully that, "thank heavens," the question of his relation to Allan Bloom had finally become "obsolete." Though his name had unfortunately been linked with Bloom's when their books were first published, people now understood that they were up to fundamentally different things. Whereas Bloom really was a conservative critic of new trends in the academy, Professor Hirsch declared, he himself considered the new trends splendid; he just wanted more people to be able to participate in them, and so wanted young students to know enough to squeeze into college. The names that are now—and more appropriately—paired as being antagonistic to recent changes in the humanities, Professor Hirsch explained, are those of Allan Bloom and William Bennett—who, he told an amused audience, are known in some quarters as "the killer Bs." Moreover, he continued, "I presume that, on the simplest level, Bloom votes or least talks to Republicans and emotionally that has not been my own history." This, too, greatly entertained the audience—though Professor Himmelfarb later had the bad taste to point out that, in fact, Professor Bloom is a Democrat and talks to whichever groups invite him.

Professor Hirsch then went on to suggest

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that, while Allan Bloom's book was an embittered response to the student unrest of the late Sixties, his own work grew out of his study of reading and writing. *Cultural Literacy*, he said, was aimed primarily at "disadvantaged" children and sought to make the elementary point that some degree of shared knowledge was essential to academic success. What that shared knowledge should be, Professor Hirsch insisted, was another question entirely: he himself would certainly not wish to make invidious distinctions among various curricula. The important thing was not what was taught but that the knowledge be shared. Continuing his effort at self-exoneration, he claimed to be "appalled" that his book had been read as a conservative tract. What he really wanted, Professor Hirsch confided in his closing expostulation, was to give everybody an opportunity to go to college.

Since questions are often more revealing than the answers they elicit, we may quote the next question, which was addressed to Professor Derrida, as much for what it tells us about the person who framed it as for the answer it received. "To what extent does the very notion of crisis," Professor Taylor asked Jacques Derrida, "serve to reaffirm the institutional structures it apparently threatens, and, for those of us who feel that the Humanities are hardly threatened enough, how optimistic should we be about the possibility of establishing a discourse which moves beyond the agonistic [i.e., contested], and apparently endlessly recuperable, language of 'crisis?'" This is a classic "Derridean" question; whoever wrote it—and one cannot help suspecting Professor Taylor himself—is obviously well steeped in deconstructivist argot. Not only does it begin with a facile inversion of common sense (the prospect of a crisis "reaffirming" what it seems to threaten) and express a marked current of subversion ("those of us who feel the Humanities are hardly threatened enough"), it also uses an appropriately forbidding jargon ("discourse," "agonistic," "endlessly recuperable"), and, above all, it is at pains to place the emphasis on language, not on the reality language describes.

Not to be outdone at his own game, however, Professor Derrida's response was itself a consummate exhibition of deconstructivist gamesmanship. Instead of addressing himself to the question, he began by posing questions of his own. He asked Professor Bundtzen whether she thought it was possible to stop the process of canonization once it had started. He himself, he said, did not believe that it could be stopped, for every attempt to do so would simply lead to an alternative process of canonization, producing a "counter-canon" like the one Professor Bundtzen and so many others had proposed. One might wish to change what was "canonized," dropping, for example, the notion of the masterpiece. But this would not bring the process of canonization itself to a halt; it would merely channel it into a different route.

Before proceeding with Professor Derrida's response, we may pause to note how far from the notion of an academic canon this talk of "canonization" is. Whatever the ecclesiastical roots of the term "canon," the process by which specific works are included in the literary canon is radically different from the process whereby an individual is canonized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. Yet "canonization" has become a vogue word in the academy. No doubt this is partly because, poaching on the aura of religious canonization, it suggests something supernatural, authoritarian—even, for many secular observers, inherently fraudulent. But it is always useful to track such misuses of language, and one cannot help pointing out that Professor Derrida's suggestion about "dropping" the notion of the masterpiece from discussions of the literary canon would be more or less like dropping the notion of the saint from the religious canon—in other words, it would make a travesty of the whole idea. Professor Derrida is hardly one to be detained by such details, however, and he quickly went on to ask Professor Hirsch what his—Professor Hirsch's—earlier theories of interpretation

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revealed about his relation to Allan Bloom, and whether there was any essential connection between his current proposals for promoting cultural literacy and his theories of interpretation.

Now, these were particularly naughty questions to put to E. D. Hirsch. Before Professor Hirsch burst upon the scene as the apostle of cultural literacy, he had acquired a certain reputation in the world of literary criticism as the author of *Validity in Interpretation* (1967). This book was a polemic against "radical historicism" and theories of linguistic indeterminacy—then still mostly of German, not French, extraction—as well as a plea for the idea that texts possess a literal meaning that provides a criterion for valid interpretation. "[T]here is clearly a sense in which we can neither evaluate a text nor determine what it means 'to us, today' until we have correctly apprehended what it means," he wrote in one characteristic passage.

Not that *Validity in Interpretation* won a particularly enthusiastic following: Proponents of literary hermeneutics and, later, of deconstruction dismissed it as hopelessly reactionary, while many of those who might have been sympathetically inclined toward the book's overall spirit regarded it as simple-minded. It became widely known not because it was admired but because it was among the most straightforward expositions of the minority view in the academy that there might be such a thing as literal meaning or, indeed, validity in interpretation. Thus, for someone as desperate as Professor Hirsch to disencumber himself of the label "conservative," it must have been galling to be reminded of his former sins—especially by Derrida, an enormously celebrated writer whose entire oeuvre stands in the most glaring contradiction to Professor Hirsch's own earlier ideas. Poor Professor Hirsch! Declaring that people had once again been wrong to see him as "conservative," he then favored us with a little self-exposition according to which the argument of *Validity in Interpretation* was scarcely to be distinguished from extreme relativism.

For his own part, Professor Derrida proceeded to launch into a typical deconstructive gambit. We should not worry about the humanities being in a state of crisis, he said, because it is in the nature of the academy to be always in crisis. Noting that the etymology of "crisis" suggests choice or decision, he assured us that "the rhetoric of crisis" is "fundamentally optimistic" since it looks forward to a solution, a choice, a decision. In fact, the problem today is that the academy is no longer in crisis and hence "there is no choice, no decision to be made." But while Professor Derrida is obviously expert at the interpretive shenanigans that make things seem the opposite of the way they really are, his subsequent comments showed that—about certain subjects, anyway—he is as interested as the next person in preserving the ordinary meanings of words. For he admitted that even if there is, alas, no crisis in the humanities today, there are some serious problems. One of the most important, he said, comes from outside the academy and concerns money. A great deal of money is being given to the sciences, while the humanities, having to make do with far more meager amounts, are in danger of being "marginalized." At least when it came to talking about money, Professor Derrida abandoned his customary intellectual hijinks and was perfectly straightforward. There was no attempt to make a lack of money seem like an abundance, or to show that the "margins" of this kind of "discourse" were really the center.

He was not quite so straightforward about what he identified as an "internal" problem that the humanities face today—namely, the problem of conservatives who want to preserve the traditional canon and the fundamental values of the humanities. Recognizing the threat that these conservatives pose to the agenda of the new academic establishment, Professor Derrida resorted to paradox: The desire to preserve the traditional role of the humanities, he said, threatens to destroy the humanities "from

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within." Indeed, according to Professor Derrida, the real way to save the humanities is to shoulder the "dangerous responsibility" of subjecting them to radical criticism, "to transform the canon, to enlarge the field." But lest it seem that he wanted simply to . . . well, to deconstruct the humanities—which after all would risk further "marginalizing" the humanities from sources of financial support—he hastened to assure us that "we all share the same respect for Shakespeare, for Milton, for others."

But do we? Does Professor Bundtzen, for example? Wasn't Professor Derrida ignoring the fact that on many American campuses, and indeed in many cases largely under the influence of his writings, "respect" is about the last word one would choose to describe the prevailing attitude toward Shakespeare, Milton, or—to employ a phrase one sees a lot these days—other "Dead White European Males"? In fact, he wants to have it both ways: to indulge in an all-out critical assault on the traditional idea of the humanities and everything they stand for and yet, when the occasion calls for it, to be able to mouth a few pious phrases about respect for Shakespeare, Milton, and those unnamed "others."

Such questions returned with renewed force when the next panelist, the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, took the floor. Before answering the first question that was addressed to her, however, she made a few observations about the proceedings thus far. It was unfortunate, Professor Himmelfarb said, that the word "conservative" should have been introduced so blithely into the discussion as a term of censure. For by intimating at the outset that "conservative" means "bad," an overtly politicized framework for the entire discussion had been established. Professor Himmelfarb acknowledged that most of the panelists would insist that anyone wanting to preserve the traditional canon was already pursuing a political agenda of his own. But it would be far more productive, she continued, if questions about politics came in at the end of the discussion rather than at the beginning. Professor Himmelfarb also noted that she had many friends who, though they were very much on the Left politically, nonetheless considered themselves conservatives in educational and cultural matters. Consequently, she suggested, a more neutral term—something like "traditional" or "conventional"—would have been preferable to "conservative" as a descriptive term.

Professor Himmelfarb went on to remind the audience that the moderator, Professor Taylor, had opened the discussion in a highly charged political manner by accusing the Reagan and Bush administrations of mounting "an extraordinary attack on recent tendencies in humanistic studies." What, she wondered, could this mean? After all, the very center for the humanities whose inauguration they were gathered together to celebrate was being supported by a large grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities under the Bush Administration. Is that the sort of "extraordinary attack" Professor Taylor had in mind?

And in response to Professor Derrida's call for more rigorous questioning in the humanities, Professor Himmelfarb noted that questions were being asked on more than one side of the issue. Professor Derrida claimed to champion the questioning of authority, of the legitimacy of tradition, and of the nature and composition of the humanities. But were not others—including William Bennett, Allan Bloom, and Lynne Cheney—also asking hard questions about the humanities? Were they not questioning the authority of the dominant voices in the academy, the legitimacy of the attempt to delegitimate the tradition, the right of entrenched powers to determine and composition of the curriculum on political grounds? Of course they were. Why then, she asked, should such questions be dismissed at the outset as an "attack" on the humanities? Are not critics like Bennett, Bloom, Cheney, and others doing precisely what Professor Derrida and his like-minded colleagues would have their own students do: scrutinizing the unacknowledged

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assumptions of "contemporary modes of discourse"?

Professor Himmelfarb then turned to the question that had been addressed to her: How would she distinguish between traditional intellectual and political history, on the one hand, and the new social history that has taken the academy by storm, on the other? She explained that the rise of social history, which concentrates on the texture of everyday life and the mundane activities of ordinary people, has tended to undermine the practice of traditional history, which was essentially "elite history," concerned with what she called high politics and great ideas. Indeed, she said, traditional intellectual and political history was precisely the history that had been enacted mostly by those whom Professor Bundtzen contemptuously referred to as "the big guys": great statesmen and military leaders in politics, great thinkers and artists in intellectual and cultural matters.

Speaking of "the big guys," Professor Himmelfarb asked Professor Bundtzen whether she was not worried about fostering a new stereotype of women, one that might be "limiting, restrictive, even possibly demeaning." For why shouldn't women as well as men be concerned with large questions? "What about the woman who does want to celebrate transcendence and uniqueness and genius and large things," Professor Himmelfarb asked, "and doesn't want to be confined to 'a nurturing role.' Is she to be illegitimized as a woman?"

This question elicited a great round of applause from the audience but considerable confusion from the podium. An obviously stunned Professor Bundtzen replied that what she had said did not preclude the possibility of genius, though she did admit that she was "very reluctant" to use the phrase "transcendent truths"—after all, why should transcendent truths be "better or of greater value to us than the kind of truths we need to live our lives, which are not usually terribly transcendent from moment to moment or hour to hour?"

Professor Bundtzen then responded to Professor Himmelfarb's criticism of the way politics had intruded into the discussion. The problem, she said, is that if as an educator in the humanities you read that you should be teaching "transcendent truths," and you have difficulty with the very notion of transcendent truths, then you feel under attack—especially if the definition of the humanities as having to do with transcendent truths is tied to purse strings. What if, she asked, the humanities center at Williams decided that this year "we're not going to deal with transcendence, we're not going to deal with truths this year, we're going to deal with . . . I don't know, I can imagine another agenda which would not be outside the realm of humane studies." In that case, the faculty of the humanities center would no doubt find that its requests for money from the government would be denied—and, she concluded, she would regard that as a "truly political" act.

It must be said that Professor Himmelfarb responded with great restraint. Did Williams's application to the National Endowment, she wondered, say something to the effect that "this year we plan to deal with transcendent truths"? Did it not rather represent quite faithfully the program the humanities center has in fact been carrying out? One might ask, in addition, what the alternative to dealing with "truths" might be: dealing with untruths, perhaps? Is this an alternative within the realm of "humane studies" that we would want humanities centers to pursue with public funds? Is it not ironical that this so-called center for the study of the humanities should in fact be dedicated to an attack on the idea of "the center" in just about every sense of the word? Professor Bundtzen did not exactly reply to Professor Himmelfarb's question, although—no doubt searching for a safe way to re-introduce a note of political virtue into the discussion—she did offer the stunning non sequitur that "I do think a lot of people feel threatened by the Helms amendment recently."

What a gift to the cultural Left the proposed Helms amendment has been! Formulated in the wake of the controversy

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over Federal funding for Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of homosexual sadomasochistic acts, the proposed amendment would have imposed a ban on giving Federal money to art that could be construed as offensive to a wide range of groups. It had already been defeated by the time Professor Bundtzen spoke out against it, but that didn't matter. To declare oneself against the amendment was still to show that one was on the side of virtue. Indeed, Professor Bundtzen's comment showed that the Helms amendment, even though it never had a prayer of being passed in its original form, has continued to provide a wonderfully convenient icon for politically correct academics, artists, and other cultural figures to attack: Where else these days can one bask in the aura of outraged virtue by risking so little?

Professor Bundtzen doubtless provided the evening's most notable caricature. But the most histrionic moments came when Professor Baker decided to weigh in against Professor Himmelfarb. If he was short on coherence and consecutive reasoning, he nonetheless succeeded in making himself abundantly clear. He was troubled, he told the Williams audience, by the ease with which Professor Himmelfarb had seemed to score points against Professor Bundtzen, using "what I call the Strom Thurmond strategy." He went on to explain what he meant with an anecdote. Once, after having heard Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech, Professor Baker turned on his television only to find Senator Thurmond exclaiming that "Negroes here have more refrigerators, more shoes, more appliances, than colored people anywhere in the world. Why are they out here marching? I just do not understand it." According to Professor Baker, Professor Himmelfarb's observation that the Williams Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities betrayed a similarly patronizing attitude, which he summed up as follows: "We've given you, even you . . . a grant, so how can we conservatives be politically motivated?"

Professor Baker then wandered on to consider Professor Himmelfarb's remark that she had many friends who were politically very liberal but who were conservative on cultural issues. These were the sort of people, Professor Baker said contemptuously, "who speak Marxist and send their kids to elite prep schools." They might talk a good line, he explained, but when it came time for "Buffy or Cokie" to go to school, it was off to some elite institution like Choate. Of course, the idea that Professor Himmelfarb, the very embodiment of the modern Jewish intellectual, had such vacuous WASP caricatures in mind when she spoke of her liberal friends who happened to be cultural conservatives is almost as amusing as it is absurd: she later responded with some pique that she knew no one who answered to Professor Baker's description of Buffy or Cokie.

By now Professor Baker was really warmed up. He more or less gave up trying to frame an argument, letting himself be carried along by a gush of increasingly strident rhetoric. There were several notable elements in the oratorical collage he constructed. First, we were informed that "the fact is, the institutional site of authority is constituted by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts." "Authority" is always a term of reproach in the academy these days, of course, as is "institutional." So identifying the Endowments as the site of institutional authority is to suggest something particularly malevolent. Exactly what it portended was not clear, except that the phrase provided a kind of transition to Professor Baker's observation that "it is a fact that the people who run these institutions are not elected by voters in this room. President Reagan doesn't call you up and say, 'Hey, Houston, what do you think?'"

Professor Baker next told us that he saw no evidence that people like William Bennett, Allan Bloom, and Professor Himmelfarb had "immersed themselves in

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the very topics of inquiry that constitute our consensus," and charged that such people dismissed out of hand recent curricular innovations "precisely on the basis of gender, class, race, and sex." Professor Baker also opined (no doubt correctly) that Allan Bloom would not have much to tell us about the work of Frederick Douglass and other nineteenth-century American black writers or about the marvels of contemporary lesbian plays—though why a specialist in Plato and Rousseau like Professor Bloom should have much to tell us about these subjects was not explained.

We were now approaching Professor Baker's peroration. "Mr. Helms and that amendment have to do entirely with the institutional framework that I have discussed," he said breathlessly, referring again (one conjectures) to the National Endowments as the site of institutional authority. He then went on to issue a warning about those who criticize the dismantling of the traditional curriculum. "They are dangerous to all of us," and even, he said, to democracy. Moreover, he charged, alluding to Professor Himmelfarb's description of traditional historiography, while this conservative view of education pretends to strive to respect the facts, it really "assigns the values and makes the facts correspond to them"—in other words, though Professor Baker didn't put it so bluntly, it lies. He then squeezed in a few words about racial stereotypes and concluded in ringing tones by saying that while it may be too early to know whether all the new movements sweeping our campuses are right, we know "indisputably that what we have seen in the past is wrong." This remarkable performance was met by wild applause.

What can we make of Professor Baker's denunciation? Consider only his observation that officials administering the National Endowments were not elected by the "voters in this room." It may be that Professor Baker is unacquainted with the idea of representative democracy. It's possible, too, that he has something to learn about the character of the American electorate. Does Professor Baker believe that the voters at large in this country favor spending their tax dollars to support university humanities programs that have devoted themselves to a frankly radical political agenda? Perhaps he believes that most voters wake up thinking, "I wish the government would give more money to professors who spend their time criticizing the site of institutional authority in this country and teaching my children about lesbian plays." Or maybe—since he, too, mentioned the Helms amendment—he is convinced that most voters want more Federal money spent on exhibitions of photographs of sexual degradation and coercion. The fact is, it is impossible to know just *what* Professor Baker thinks about these or the other matters he touched upon. We can be pretty sure, however, that he is blissfully unaware of how privileged and protected a position he and his colleagues occupy, thanks precisely to their being insulated by the authority and largesse of the institutions they excoriate.

No doubt sensing that he had let himself get carried away, Professor Baker later apologized to Professor Himmelfarb for comparing her to Strom Thurmond. He found nothing else in his declamation to retract, however, and, as the audience filed out of Chapin Hall a little later that evening, his denunciations continued to echo. Professor Taylor had concluded by reassuring us yet again that, even if there is a crisis in the humanities, it is "a sign of vitality rather than demise." In fact, the proceedings at Williams reminded one of the extent to which the centrist position among our academic faculties has collapsed into a species of accommodating leftism. Not only was there the continuing spectacle of Professor Hirsch busily dissociating himself from charges of conservatism; there was the even more egregious example of this surrender to the Left provided by Werner Gundersheimer's convocation speech the following day. Though obviously meant to represent a "moderate" position midway between, say, Professors Himmelfarb and

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Baker, this historian and director of the Folger Shakespeare Library—a man whose very position would seem to require him to act as a guardian of one of the greatest writers in the literary canon—in effect showed to what extent academic moderates have capitulated to the radical extreme. His speech, entitled " 'Our Battles join'd': The Struggle for the American Mind," had two chief messages: 1) New trends in the humanities, from deconstruction and feminism to radical curricular revision, are only so many signs of vibrancy and health; and 2) The real danger to the humanities comes from those who wish to preserve the traditional curriculum and the values it embodies.

Professor Gundersheimer's address was full of the requisite clichés and slogans: the humanities today had been "enriched" by "diversity" and "innovation," they had "moved with the times" "by accepting new subjects and approaches into their curricula," and so on. He did speak with some nostalgia about the English professor of old whose task was to master the literature in his field and then teach and write about it "in plain, accessible English that any educated person could understand and appreciate." No doubt that was precisely the ideal once held up to and perhaps even espoused by Professor Gundersheimer himself. He admitted that it had long since been abandoned by fashionable academics, yet went on to assure us that, because "change is the only constant within existing academic disciplines," its loss was not a tragedy but an exciting new challenge.

At the center of Professor Gundersheimer's speech to the dutifully assembled Williams community was a solemn warning about the danger of attempts to reinstate a more traditional view of the humanities and what he called "the genteel ideal of plain talk in support of timeless verities." Predictably, Allan Bloom came in for particular censure because of his allegedly "simplistic attacks on colleges and universities." Yet Professor Gundersheimer was careful to assert that the problem went beyond Bloom and his followers. "Many distinguished scholars," he said, "see the flux of scholarship as a threat to the very substance of received doctrines, or what they are likely to call 'the truth.'" (One wondered what Professor Gundersheimer would be likely to call it.)

As a recent example of this "revolt against complexity," he quoted from a book review that had appeared last summer in *The Wall Street Journal*. The review was written by Edward Shils, the eminent sociologist and professor at the University of Chicago, and concerned *The Culture We Deserve*, a collection of essays on culture and the academy by the historian Jacques Barzun. One of Professor Barzun's chief complaints in that book is that, in the name of specialization, much academic discourse in the humanities has mired itself in a jargon that is both trivial and unintelligible. Professor Shils seconded this criticism and took it a step further. He castigated "the destructiveness of deconstruction," an intellectual movement he aptly described as "that most chic of French academic exports, which preaches a nihilistic skepticism of language and that has now gained an almost unchallenged empire in American universities." Professor Shils went on to note that the collaboration of deconstruction and other instances of academic "theory" with "a smattering of Marxism and political antinomianism" had "ravaged" the study of the humanities.

Professor Gundersheimer was quick to ridicule Professor Shils's description of the state of the humanities. He began by telling us that it was little more than an example of "the discourse of alienation" and "the old 'evil empire' gambit." (One can be sure that the damning allusion to President Reagan was not lost on the audience.) He then proceeded with a few words about his own view of matters in the academy, proposing the adoption of "common sense" as an effective antidote to extremists on both sides of the debate over the humanities. That might seem a worthy proposal, common sense being in short supply in the humanities these days. But lest anyone think he was

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suggesting something reactionary, Professor Gundersheimer explained that "I am of course prepared to believe that one person's common sense is another person's nonsense." In other words, he supports a wonderful version of "common sense"—what we might perhaps call a "deconstructed" version—that is common only to the individual who happens to hold it.

Not surprisingly, this custodian of the legacy of Shakespeare scarcely mentioned Shakespeare's name. Instead of worrying about literature, he favored us with a few "axioms" that he claimed to find useful when thinking about the mission of the humanities. For example, he informed us that the humanities do not thrive on sameness, but on "difference and conflict"; similarly, we discovered that "[c]omplexity in the world of ideas isn't scary. It's fun." "What is scary," Professor Gundersheimer pursued, "is reductionism .... Hitler knew exactly what art was. So does Jesse Helms." (You see how useful Senator Helms has proved to be.) And it's the same way, apparently, with those who claim to know the "original intent of the framers of the Constitution"—that is to say, those who, like Judge Robert Bork, have fallen afoul of the Left. Professor Gundersheimer concluded by assuring us that, although he was all in favor of conflict, he did think it would be "regrettable if the great issues that now divide us—the sanctity of the so-called canon; the referentiality of language; the legitimacy of new methods and subjects of inquiry—were to lessen the claims of humanists and social scientists to serious public attention."

The contrast between the message of Professor Gundersheimer's speech and the setting could hardly have been starker. Here we had the most traditional of academic ceremonies, replete with academic regalia and communal singing of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," providing the setting for a speech whose essential point was that the humanities can cut themselves off from both their foundation and their ideals and still be said to be thriving. What else are we to make of the evocation of a "common sense" that has a constituency of one? Or the contemptuous reference to "the sanctity of the so-called canon"? Or the suggestion that the "referentiality of language" is something the humanities today could just as well do without? Or the idea that "new methods"—meaning deconstruction and its progeny—and new "subjects of inquiry"—meaning everything from pulp novels to rock videos—are fit subjects for humanistic study? Indeed, what else are we to make of the sum of Williams College's inquiry into the question, "Crisis in the Humanities?"

The point is not that Professor Gundersheimer is an especially important or radical figure on the academic scene; he is neither. Nor is his message at all out of the ordinary. Again, this is precisely the problem: that even an ordinary, self-proclaimed moderate should as a matter of course abandon moderation and adopt "moving with the times" as a criterion of critical judgment. In his famous *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), the German poet-philosopher Friedrich Schiller exhorted his readers to give their contemporaries what they need, not what they praise. It is good advice, as timely today as it was at the end of the eighteenth century. But to be effective, Schiller's admonition requires of us not only insight but also the courage to dissent from the entrenched pieties of our time. Professor Gundersheimer's performance is one of many recent events reminding us that our colleges and universities have entered a new era of intellectual conformity in which such dissent is all but excluded from serious consideration. This alone shows that, notwithstanding the equivocations of Professors Taylor, Gundersheimer, and company, the humanities are indeed in a state of crisis today. One measure of the severity of that crisis is the extent to which a genuinely moderate center has collapsed in the face of ideological pressure from the Left. In this respect, the events at Williams last September are a depressing token of the situation of the humanities in the academy at large. What we have witnessed is nothing less than the occupation of the center by a new academic establishment, the establishment of tenured radicals.

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Letter from Paris: open house at the Bastille

by Karen Wilkin

In 1982, a handful of young Parisian painters and sculptors who worked near each other decided to hold an open studio exhibition. As their friend and sometime spokesman, the poet and critic Marcelin Pleynet, later wrote, the idea of the "portes ouvertes" was not capricious, but was provoked by the vast gulf between the real energies of contemporary Parisian art and the Parisian art establishment.

Recalling the period when he first began visiting the studios of the originators of the "portes ouvertes," Pleynet wrote: "the work that I could see in their studios seemed to me infinitely more inventive, stronger and more dynamic than anything I could see in the galleries." He blamed the dealers for "not exhibiting anything that hasn't already been exhibited," accusing them of being "entranced" by what was being sold abroad, of succumbing to the "poisonous American notion" that there is no French art and, finally, of "fear of small profits."

"The result: the Parisian art world is as closed as a prison," Pleynet wrote. The "portes ouvertes" exhibition was intended to break down the wall of that prison. The irony, which Pleynet certainly enjoyed, was that his friends' studios were located within a stone's throw of the place de la Bastille.

Artists had been drawn to the district by what had originally drawn their New York confrères to SoHo—large, inexpensive work space that no one else much wanted. The streets adjacent to the Bastille, the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the rue de Charonne, had been home to furniture makers since the eighteenth century. Furniture is still made and sold there, but few craftsmen inhabit the district; their vacant workplaces attracted the artists.

Behind the buildings that house the shops are enormous courtyards, and sometimes inner courts as well, surrounded by four- and five-story buildings. Narrow, winding stairs lead to open spaces lit by rows of large windows. These pre-industrial-age ateliers are nothing like the vast, high-ceilinged lofts serviced by freight elevators that could once be had at reasonable rents in lower Manhattan, but they are large for Paris and, most important, they were relatively cheap and easy to find in the late Seventies and early Eighties.

The first open studio exhibition was a success. Two years later a second was organized, this time with twenty-three artists instead of six. On this occasion, the participants declared themselves to be a nonprofit association established for the purpose of "advancing and encouraging the practice of contemporary art in the district and acting as a connection between the district's numerous artists." Pleynet coined the name "Le Génie de la Bastille," a play on the notion of genius as an abstract commodity shared by the district's numerous artists and the genius of place, as embodied by the winged figure, torch in one

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hand, broken chain in the other, that stands atop the column in the center of the place de la Bastille. (The statue serves as the organization's logo.)

London artists, such as the inhabitants of the Stockwell Depot, the Greenwich Studios, and the Berry Street Studios, have held annual exhibitions for years, for very much the same reasons as the artists of Le Génie, but as far as I know there are no official governing bodies involved. In Brooklyn, the large, multiple-studio buildings under the Manhattan Bridge hold similar open houses, but even more casually. Le Génie's having a formal base seems very French, as does the group's having recruited, at least in its early days, a poet-critic as its spokesman. I keep thinking of a famous comment of Braque's. Asked what he thought of criticism, he replied, "if a critic's explanations increase the general obscurity, that's all to the good. French poets are particularly helpful in this respect. Few of them have understood the first thing about modern art yet they're always writing about it."

But there was method in the creation of a formal association and the connection with the well-known and respected Pleynet. They helped Le Génie to become credible, to be regarded as an event and an entity to be taken seriously. By 1985, when Le Génie held the third "portes ouvertes" exhibition, the association boasted more than sixty members from the district, and the show, which included artists invited from elsewhere in Paris and abroad, included ninety painters, sculptors, printmakers, photographers, and the odd architect. Something like four thousand visitors—possibly more—came to the studios. Since then, Le Génie has continued to expand and to function more and more as a professional organization. Relations have been established with the Ministry of Culture and with other artists' organizations; sponsors have been found to offer prizes and defray costs. There's a public-relations person and an information office that, during the five days of the exhibition, allows visitors to preplan their itineraries by consulting illustrated brochures on each artist. There have been television and radio spots, articles in French newspapers and magazines—and a few abroad—and, this year, a short film about Le Génie on the television sets that entertain you while you wait for your train in the Métro.

Since Le Génie is cannily scheduled to correspond with the last weekend of FIAC, the international art fair held annually in Paris, many of the visitors are far from casual. Art writers, curators, dealers, other artists, and collectors navigate the alleys and courtyards, consulting their maps and searching for "fond du cour, escalier 17, 4e étage." So do friends, relatives, art groupies, students, and the merely curious. Seeing the inside of a *real artist*'s studio is considered to be something of a privilege, to judge by the crowds, panting slightly after the long climb, pushing into each workplace. "Today, the visitors were well informed," the sculptor Léo Delarue told me on the second day of this year's exhibition. "They asked intelligent questions and it was interesting. But yesterday someone stepped back from looking at a painting and knocked over a sculpture."

The very success of Le Génie has created problems. Like SoHo, this forgotten neighborhood is now perceived to be a desirable, possibly even a chic place. The rue de Lappe, once home of some of the toughest toughs in Paris, now boasts a restaurant with a décor so dazzlingly elegant that it seems like an intrusion not from another arrondissement but from another planet. And among the new concerns of the association is the defense of artists threatened with eviction from their studios as the district attracts "outsiders" with more money to spend. The current president of Le Génie, Bernard Cousinier, and one of the founders, Vincent Barré, have said publicly that the preservation of the neighborhood as a place for working artists is essential; no one wants a French version of today's SoHo. Cousinier, who has a spectacular studio in a former garage, is all too aware of the

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problem. "Half of the visitors don't even look at the paintings. They want to know if I own the space or if it is leased. Then they start designing: 'We could put a mezzanine here and the kitchen there.' It makes me furious."

Le Génie's success has other ramifications. Over the past five years, the quarter has become so densely colonized by artists that the "portes ouvertes" exhibition has risked becoming impossibly large, with far more studios opened than anyone could reasonably contemplate visiting, even over several days. (The event is already known as "le jogging de la Bastille.") More important, the level of professionalism and seriousness that distinguished the early days has been compromised. Predictably, the recent exponential increase in the number of people making art has not resulted in a similar increase in the number of people making outstandingly good art. Nor did Le Génie's steadily growing membership mean that the annual exhibition automatically became more interesting.

This year, in an effort to preserve a certain level of quality and to keep Le Génie manageable in size, participating artists were screened (a controversial decision, not unanimously endorsed). A jury consisting of a curator, a collector, and five artists chose approximately sixty artists from the district, making sure that "no single aesthetic direction was favored." In fact, suitability of the artist's space for exhibition often seemed to have been as much a consideration as the work itself. There were other innovations this year. Some of the "pioneers" of the exhibition, accomplished painters such as Dominique Thiolat and Pierre Nivollet (who were among the first artists in the quarter and among the original six exhibitors), ceded their places to younger artists. In honor of the Bicentennial, "Le Génie de la Bastille this year challenges the traditional split between Paris and the provinces," said the press release, "portes ouvertes aux régions françaises;" not only did the invitees come exclusively from other parts of France, but this year also saw the birth of a sort of Salon des Refusés. Artists in the district not associated with Le Génie mounted their own event, opening their studios under the banner "La Bastille à vraiment du génie."

What was the exhibition like? It was a diverse, uneven, informative show of more than one hundred twenty painters, sculptors, printmakers, and a few photographers, with some installations and a little video. There were some noticeable high points. Among the more memorable works were Cousinier's generously scaled, lean abstractions, whose simple, not quite geometric divisions often had vaguely architectural associations. Cousinier makes us pay attention to delicate variations of surface, but he often contradicts these subtleties with abrupt shifts of color and tone. His best pictures are austere, elegant, possessed with a marvelous quality of light. These Cartesian images come as something of a surprise, since his earlier work was marked by lush, calligraphic drawing. "The drawing impulse has found its way into the surface," Cousinier explains.

Léo Delarue exhibited her sculpture in Cousinier's studio. Her recent enigmatic "vessels" constructed from relatively narrow strips of metal seemed to me more interesting than the slightly earlier, more geometric and symmetrical pieces shown alongside. The best new work, a split, swelling form, unfortunately had to be withdrawn from the show, since it proved too fragile and unstable to survive exposure to crowds. Delarue has a splendid feel for the character of her materials. She can make weld marks into significant drawing, can make the difference between plaster and metal or between raw metal and paint seem important. Her newest work is clearly her best.

One of Cousinier's guests from the regions, Guy Ibanez, from Marseilles, showed large, atmospheric pictures that seemed to me a little overloaded, although each passage was effective enough in itself. The best picture incorporated a slightly battered sheet of copper whose shape was

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both reinforced and canceled out by painting. The collaged metal gave Ibanez a needed "spine" against which to react, but even his less successful pictures bore witness to his nice touch and quirky sense of color.

Down the street, in one of the amazing courtyard buildings of the rue de Charonne, Marie-Joseph Cart showed collages. Cézanne's late watercolors are clearly much on her mind, but Cart makes the notion of rendering form with colored planes into something tangible, modeling overscaled abstracted images with pieces of painted paper. Cart is best when she limits her color. When she uses all the primaries and most of the secondaries in a single picture, she cancels out whatever color rhythms she has managed to construct. She's better, too, when her collaged elements are large; when she starts fitting together vast numbers of tiny bits, the result seems more like obsession than painting. But there is something fresh, direct, and worth paying attention to in all of Cart's work.

There were some surprises in Vincent Barré's studio: first, the odd, engaging sculpture of one of Barré's guests, Vincent Gontier, from the Champagne-Ardenne region. Gontier works, improbably enough, in paper and steel. He compresses, imprisons, and warps huge stacks of newsprint—a single edition of a particular paper, for example—with massive steel beams, bolted together. Gontier's large pieces have an odd, lively quality, despite their symmetry and frontality, not due simply to the sense of pressure on the stacked paper. It's animated, totemic minimalism, if such a thing is possible. Gontier's small pieces, jewelry-like in scale, employ too artfully cut and shaped mini-stacks of paper and equally artful "holders." They are not in the same league with his large works.

The second surprise was that Barré, who is one of the most interesting French sculptors of his generation, decided this year to show only collages. Barré's sculpture employs found objects and scavenged materials and his collages, with their extremely rich, layered surfaces, obviously spring from the same pleasure in textures and physical contrasts. There is even, at times, a direct correspondence between the suggested imagery of the paper works and a series of constructed heads that has preoccupied Barré, on and off, for several years. The large-scale works on paper sometimes incorporate drawn images based on Giotto's frescos in the Scrovegni Chapel, but, since Barré is not "appropriating" the Giottesque imagery, but is, I believe, working with it out of passionate admiration and sympathy, integration becomes an issue. When the reference remains intact and the drawn image stays separate from its surroundings—intellectually and visually—the work suffers. When Barré succeeds, the drawn image is subsumed by its new context, surviving as a memory, even disappearing, but charging the picture nonetheless. In the best works, line functions in many ways—as mark, as boundary, as carrier of rhythm *and* as carrier of image—not simply as a means of depiction. "Maybe I have to get the Giottos out of my system," Barré says, "but those figures are still of great importance to me right now." In his sculpture Barré has managed to make use of the reference in more suggestive, oblique ways. His best collages are closest in mood to his sculpture.

Two younger artists, Joël Brisse and Tieri Briet, were among the more memorable. Both affix relief elements to their canvases or play with changes in level. Brisse rings changes on a simplified figure, fragmenting it, moving it around on the "field" of his canvas. Some of my enthusiasm for Brisse comes from what I know of his work from other contexts, rather than from what I could see here, since he had room to exhibit only two pictures in his minuscule studio. Briet is fascinated with alchemy and obscure science. He fills his paintings with arcane, archaic "words" and images that evoke both the medieval laboratory and the anatomy theater. When Briet is at his best, the mystical rubrics take their place as part of a compelling overall image; you don't, as in his less successful pieces, feel that you ought to

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be reading them like rebuses. Like Brisse, Briet is young. They are both worth keeping an eye on.

Claude Lagoutte's insistent pictures separated themselves from many of the rest. His unreadable calligraphy evoked, at once, Oriental texts and landscape—don't ask me to explain how. Unfortunately, constraints of space prevented his fellow exhibitor, the sculptor François Geissman, from showing anything that gave an accurate idea of what he might be capable of. I'd seen photographs of Geissman's roughly shaped wooden slabs and planks, installed in particular locations, that made me curious to see the real thing. I'm still curious, but no better informed.

Lack of space is a recurring problem in the studios at Le Génie. Most of them are domestic rather than industrial in scale (which often makes for intimate-size work, in an intimate relation to the viewer). Some are very small, while others are cluttered with the paraphernalia of living and making art. While it's possible to get an accurate idea of what a working studio is like, which may be an attraction for some visitors, it's hard to see the art. For example, the Japanese artist Matsutani (a resident of Paris) makes large, dramatic installations, part drapery, part drawing and painting. I suspect that the piece he showed this year was a good one, but it was almost impossible to tell. The casually assembled mass simply didn't separate itself from its surroundings, and a wall of drawings, plus the small sculptures by Matsutani's guest, simply added to the confusion. In some studios it was difficult to tell whether the size of the work was a concession to the limits of the improvised "gallery" or whether it was how the artist usually worked. Sculptors frequently showed what appeared to be maquettes and relied on books of photos to announce their presence—which raises the question of whether Le Génie is still an exhibition or whether it has become a publicity event.

General observations? There was a surprising amount of serious, often quite good abstract painting and sculpture—Christine Ankaoua's superheated sheets of color, for example, or Nicole Courtois's geometric constructions on stalks. Ankaoua could pay more attention to the actual character of her paint, and Courtois could renounce symmetry more (as she did in her best piece), but both of them are plausible, ambitious artists. I was struck by the noticeable lack of cynical, ironic, and trendy art, all the more surprising because there was so much of it—predictably—at FIAC. But perhaps this is why most of the participants in Le Génie are still outside of the Parisian art establishment.

Little has changed since Marcelin Pleynet denounced the Parisian dealers in 1985. A few brave galleries show the work of younger, less well-known artists, and they are to be applauded, but the majority of the galleries still prefer to take fewer risks. And the contemporary French painters and sculptors who have been sanctified by the major dealers and the Beaubourg are by and large a pretty uninspiring lot. Warts and all, Le Génie serves a useful purpose: the cross-section of unofficial French painting and sculpture that it offers can't easily be seen elsewhere. Some of the work is better than what is more readily available; some is worse; most is as good.

There was a good deal of excited talk toward the end of Le Génie. Some artists had sold a respectable number of works out of the studio. A few had been invited to show in exhibition centers outside of Paris. At dinner one night, a small group of painters and sculptors seemed a little wistful. "We don't really talk to each other very much about our work," said one young sculptor. "You always hear about the aesthetic debate in the great days of the Bateau-Lavoir—how they all looked at art together and talked." "Ah," said a painter. "Perhaps in twenty years people will be nostalgic for the great days of Le Génie."

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Poems *by Richard Moore & Elizabeth Spires*

The time

Throughout this autumn-ruined wood, collapsed and dead,
combs of sharp spiney leaves break out in violent red.

So little green now; everywhere this flame, this wound,
tongues from an undergrowth disordered and unpruned,

through which the chilly air stirs with a paper sound,
and tree trunks stand there helpless, stuck in the numb ground.

What's this rebellious bleeding on the final day?
Is it you, world, or I, angry at our decay?

—Richard Moore

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The haiku master

Master
Under the plum moon, he sits
like a frog on a lily pad,
waiting, waiting for what?

Pupil
I, too, am illuminated
by the moon, enraptured
by the frog's *Thrum! Thrum!*
My heart beats loudly
like a big bass drum.

Master/Pupil
He asks with a smile,
"What shall you seek, seeker?"
And I, the fool, answer,
"The stars! The plum moon! Love!"

Pupil
July, August, September . . .
Desire follows desire
these hot sleepless nights
of late summer.

Master
In the mirror: ego.
The I-maker looks out,
liking, disliking, what it sees.

Pupil
Great minimalist,
there are too many words!
How shall I choose among them?

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Master
Paring the apple, he eats
it slowly, bit by bit.
Down to the nothing of it.

Pupil
September, October, November . . .
Hidden, I watched you
tear the last leaf
from the calendar.

Master
Once I dreamed the snow
fell all night,
effacing the earth.
And woke to what I dreamed.

Pupil
Once, as the snow fell,
I was at peace
with myself. No more.

Master
Black ink, white paper,
the characters appear:
a farewell party where
I am both host and guest.

Pupil
I saw you to the ferry.
We waved. The pier
I stood on moved away.

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Master
Spring. Now I'm a ghost
and you're my dream,
a flame of shadow
in a world of green.

Pupil
You're gone. A cricket
tunelessly sings,
That was a life!

Master
It's black and white here.
I don't care. No koto
plays, but I don't miss it.
Soon I'll be pure spirit.

Pupil
My canvas is ready,
small receding square.
My brush, one hair.
Now to paint what isn't there.

—*Elizabeth Spires*

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Music

Vladimir Horowitz 1904-1989

by Samuel Lipman

The death of Vladimir Horowitz in November at the age of eighty-five was more than the passing of one of the greatest pianists the world has yet known. In a way that can only become clearer as the years pass, it also seems the end of the era of the piano. For if Horowitz in his maturity was the king of the pianists, the piano for close on two centuries was the king of the instruments. We have known for some years that we no longer can say, with Walter Pater, that "all art aspires to the condition of music." Horowitz's death tells us that, with the collapse of a living musical tradition, the piano, too, as the prime medium for the communication of that tradition, is now yet another candidate for the museum of civilization.

As long as Horowitz lived, it was possible for many to be beguiled by the idea that the piano still lived. It was his gift to seem to occupy fully every musical stage on which he deigned to appear. From the time of his much-heralded return to concert life in 1965 to the very day of his death, Horowitz never ceased to be the cynosure of his colleagues and of the musical audience. His concert appearances, relatively few in number, and almost always in solo recital rather than with orchestra, were breathlessly awaited and invariably oversubscribed on their announcement. His many recordings, made from his young manhood to almost the close of his life, sold marvelously and had a way of becoming the reference point from which the performances by others of the same repertory were evaluated.

It is the very existence of Horowitz's recordings, extending as they do over some six decades, that now provides us with an opportunity to survey his great achievement. The purpose of this examination must finally be the measurement of this brilliant artist's playing against the work of his distinguished twentieth-century colleagues. But this altogether natural, proper, and indeed inevitable process of comparative judgment can hardly be made without a description and assessment of his playing in its own terms, so as to identify its salient attributes and the course of its development.[1]

At the core of Horowitz's playing was his characteristic sonority. He possessed perhaps the most distinctive piano tone of the age: big, gleaming, and penetrating. To make the Horowitz tone possible, the pianos he played were Steinways that he owned and took care to have prepared to suit his requirements; they were always louder, brighter, more aggressive in sound, and quicker in response than any his colleagues were likely to find comfortable. As a result,

1 For a fuller treatment of Horowitz's playing and life than is possible here, see my "Horowitz: King of Pianists" in *Music After Modernism* (1979) and "The Real Vladimir Horowitz?" in *The House of Music* (1984). The earlier article first appeared in *Commentary* in May 1977, the latter in *The New Criterion* in March 1983.

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when Horowitz played, listeners always knew that the instrument he played was itself being tested to the limit.

Close in importance to Horowitz's tone—and intimately related to it—was the demonic energy of his playing. Not only did the individual notes he played crackle, but his characteristic rhythmic pulse was sharply etched, natural-seeming even at its most surprising, and attention-getting whether the tempo at which he was playing was fast or slow. He was known as a pianist who loved speed, and on occasion (as in his famous recorded performances of the Tchaikowsky First Concerto with his father-in-law Arturo Toscanini from 1941 and 1943) he chose blindingly fast tempos. But throughout his career the effect of speed came at least as much from the tautness of his rhythm as from his tempos in themselves. The result was the opposite of regular and metronomic: when Horowitz played slowly, which in fact he often did, his characteristic fluidity of pulse so bound the notes together that the listener had little choice but to hang on each sound and breathlessly await the next.

His technique was imposing in its power to articulate melodic lines, even at moments of great pianistic complexity; it was imposing too in its articulation—the amount of space he seemed to be able to put between the notes even when his fingers ran at their swiftest. His technique, combined with the force of his musical intellect, enabled him to be concerned with the smallest details of phrasing and touch. One must assume that his technique, though immense, was not universally applicable to every demand. He recorded curiously few Chopin *Etudes*, for more than one hundred fifty years the truest test of a pianist's equipment; it must be said, though, that those he did record (and play in the concert hall) were spectacular.

His knowledge of the musical repertory—not just that written for the piano—was huge, though he was very selective about the works he chose to essay in public. His concerto repertory, for example, was sadly restricted. He only recorded five concertos: the Beethoven "Emperor," the Brahms B flat, the Tchaikowsky First, the Rachmaninov Third, and (at the very end of his life) the Mozart A major (K. 466).[2] Of these concerto recordings, the two Tchaikowsky recordings with Toscanini are unsurpassed. So too are his 1930 (with Albert Coates) and 1951 (with Fritz Reiner) Rachmaninov Third recordings; his third and final recording of this stirring work, based on a 1978 live Carnegie Hall performance (with Eugene Ormandy) in which Horowitz was appearing with orchestra for the first time in more than twenty years, now seems stronger in passion than in pianistic command. Only the recent Mozart A major (with Carlo Maria Giulini), the only one of his concerto recordings to appear first as a CD, cannot be said to be in the musical class of the other Horowitz concerto recordings.

Horowitz's repertory was centered for many years on the solo music of Chopin, which he played with a unique rhythmic force and snap, and also with an often compelling tendency to waywardness; his performances and recordings of Chopin *Mazurkas* have never been equalled. He was also a marvelous player of Mendelssohn and Liszt, where he brought to the former an unrivaled songfulness and delicacy, and to the latter an equally unrivaled brilliance and excitement.

Of music earlier than that of the great Romantics, Horowitz performed almost no Bach in the original; some Bach, though, he performed memorably in the grand transcriptions of Busoni. He was an extraordinary Scarlatti player, finding wit and color in every measure of these small gems. His Haydn, going back at least as far as a 1932 recording of the imposing E flat Sonata (Hoboken XVI: 52), was revelatory, though

2 There is, however, a live 1936 recording, presumably taken from a radio broadcast, of Horowitz playing the Brahms D minor Concerto, with Bruno Walter conducting the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. It is newly available on a CD transfer, and it is marvelous.

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by contrast his Mozart always seemed vanquished by pianistic overkill. He played relatively few of the thirty-two Beethoven sonatas: the D major, opus 10, no. 3; the *Pathétique*; the "Moonlight"; the E flat major, opus 31, no. 3; the "Waldstein"; the "Appassionata"; and the A major, opus 101. In his playing of the Beethoven sonatas he lacked a certain warmth and richness, always preferring hard-etched contrasts and stark colors; his early (1934) recording of the thirty-two Variations in C minor, however, is, in its perfect lightness and clarity, a classic of the phonograph.

Mention must be made of Horowitz's extraordinary performances of the sadly limited amount of contemporary music of his maturity that he chose to play. Only two such composers benefited from his immense talents—the Russian Sergei Prokofiev and the American Samuel Barber. The Horowitz recordings of the Prokofiev Sonata no. 7 (1942) and the Barber Sonata (1949) are not simply classic, but definitive. In their unlikely combination of hot lyricism and cold clarity, they define the very sound of these marvelous works. That he recorded no other great works written after World War I (and, save for the Prokofiev sonatas nos. 6 and 8, played none in concert either) must remain a comment both on what was available to him and on his own energy and curiosity. His Bartók, Copland, and Stravinsky, to name three very different kinds of music he might have played but didn't, might well have equaled his Prokofiev and Barber.

Whereas in his youth and middle age Horowitz looked for novelties in the early Romantic repertory—for example, in the music of Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) and Karl Czerny (1791-1857)—as he grew older he seemed to be searching for late Romantic music that, while little known, would enable him to deploy his vast pianistic resources of sound and excitement. Thus in his last years he turned to the extended solo works of Scriabin and Rachmaninov, the contemporary music, after all, of his early childhood in Russia. Both of these composers were great pianists, and playing their music seemed to involve Horowitz totally; here, at least to my taste, Horowitz's performances ultimately fail to be persuasive, for these composers' more ambitious solo works lack the structural interest needed either to support their harmonic and melodic sweetness or to justify their pianistic demands.

It is impossible, even in this early assessment of Horowitz's integral pianistic achievement, to avoid comment upon how his playing developed over the course of his life. Before the advent of recorded sound, such a survey had perforce to rely upon the more or less accurate memory of more or less qualified colleagues and critics. Now, of course, recordings provide a kind of hard evidence for description and comparison. With Horowitz such evidence seems even more reliable than it does with many of his colleagues, for his recordings—many of them, especially as he grew older, from live performances—seemed, as they were issued, to match listeners' memories of the concerts they had recently heard from him, and to predict accurately what they would hear in the future.

The evidence of these records suggests, not surprisingly, that Horowitz's most virtuoso playing—in the sense of sheer athleticism—was done in his youth, and that this period of fleet brilliance was closed at the time of his marriage to Toscanini's daughter in 1933 and his resulting close musical relationship with the conductor. The influence of the powerful Toscanini on Horowitz hardly produced a carbon copy of the Italian maestro: Horowitz's lyrical freedom, like his choice of repertory, always remained his own. What did come from Toscanini, and what stayed with Horowitz even after Toscanini's death in 1954, was an increased depth of emotion and power of structural projection. Horowitz's vintage years, then, were from about 1933 until his retirement in 1953 from the concert stage, a retirement doubtless due to what in a gentler time would have been called

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unhappiness, and is today called severe psychological difficulties. It is in these years that we witness the great core of his art, the most serious repertory in the most masterful performances. It is these records, ranging from Haydn to Barber, that will remain in the pianist's enduring legacy.

Horowitz did some recording immediately after his 1953 retirement, and as part of a return to full activity he resumed large-scale recording in the early 1960s. But when he returned to live performance in 1965 with a triumphant Carnegie Hall recital, it was to present a musical image at once backward- and forward-looking. In one important sense the 1965 Horowitz was the old Horowitz, electric, impulsive, and commanding; he played the same pieces in recognizably the same way as he had for three decades before. But it was a new Horowitz too, sometimes more heedless of the requirements that good taste imposes on scale, and often noticeably more wayward in matters of rhythm and pulse than he had ever been before.

As the years passed after 1965, it became clearer to seasoned Horowitz admirers that their idol was no more immune to the ravages of time than anyone else. To say this is not simply a matter of saying that he was now playing more wrong notes than he had played earlier; he had never been an immaculate or antiseptic executant, even in his days of glory—and mistakes, after all, can easily be cut out of recordings. It is also not to say that he shirked the most challenging parts of the repertory; though he seemed to avoid some of his old specialties—the Tchaikowsky Concerto is a case in point—in general his late repertory remained, as it had always been, at the highest level of difficulty. What Horowitz lost as he grew older was his incredible pianistic refinement and *souplesse*, his ability effortlessly to convey the most minute levels and difference of phrasing, rhythm, and tonal shading. Now, as I listen to his last recordings, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that their greatest beauty comes from our awareness of how much he wanted to do, and how little he was able to accomplish. It is the highest compliment that can be paid to Horowitz as a pianist to recognize that it was only in noticing this inevitable loss of command that it became fully possible to honor the magic of what he had once possessed. Only hearing is believing: to witness this magic at its most magical, one must listen to his 1944 recording of the Czerny Variations on the Aria *La Ricordanza*, opus 33. This performance was last available on LP in the 1970s; it surely will be re-issued in a CD transfer.

One can regret, as I do, that Horowitz did not choose to illuminate more of the most profound works of the piano repertory; one can regret, as I did earlier, that he did not play more of the music of his own maturity. But after the death of Rachmaninov in 1943, Horowitz, as a pianist, had no rivals; as a musical eminence who played the piano, he had only one—Arthur Rubinstein, who died in 1982 at the age of ninety-five. Marvelous as Rubinstein's playing was, and large as his concert and recorded repertory was, by purely pianistic comparison with Horowitz he was merely remarkable, though hardly a titan. But as what I have called an eminence—as a man commanding not just the concert stage but in some sense the world—Rubinstein, in love of music, love of people, and love of life, was incomparable.

It is a blessing for us in these glory-denuded times that the recordings of both Horowitz and Rubinstein convey their separate greatnesses. In the future we shall find it hard not to think of them together as encapsulating the last great age of the piano. Now our thoughts can only be with Vladimir Horowitz. It is not too much to say that in death he looms larger than those he has left behind.

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Art

The legend business

by Jed Perl

There are gallery owners (many) who dream of turning living artists into living legends, and there are gallery owners (a few) who won't be bothered with anybody who isn't a living legend. The nurture and maintenance of legends is a tricky, expensive business. Mary Boone is Mary Boone because she knows how to make this year's scandal into next year's old master. But then again, Julian Schnabel left Boone for the Pace Gallery on Fifty-seventh Street because he wasn't becoming an old master fast enough. In the geography of reputations it's easier to pass from uptown into eternity, or at least into the illusion of eternity that a sterling reputation provides. You'll never turn an artist into a legend on the garbage-strewn streets of the Lower East Side. This is one reason why the scene there fizzled. And it's infinitely easier to create a legend if the surroundings themselves are legendary. This is why the Gagosian Gallery, lately of West Twenty-third Street and definitely in the legend business (they deal in both the living ones and the recently deceased ones), moved to Madison Avenue last year.

Gagosian's current space, in the old Parke-Bernet Building on Madison between Seventy-sixth and Seventy-seventh streets, has high ceilings and an oversized skylight. Coming off the elevator, a gallery-goer can feel transported to heaven. I hope that someday Gagosian will hang something of beauty up there: to my eyes, Jasper Johns's Maps and Andy Warhol's Shadow paintings don't do the trick. But the atmosphere at a place like Gagosian's, which is serene yet imperial, is so potent as to neutralize mere opinions—mine, yours, the next guy's. At this point a picture palace like Gagosian's—or Mary Boone's, where Roy Lichtenstein's Mirror paintings from the late Sixties and early Seventies were given a portentously elegant show last fall—can seal an artist's place in history more effectively than our museums, which turn even the works of the most widely acclaimed artist into a species of circus décor. Warhol looks a hell of a lot more important at the Gagosian Gallery (whose owner was selling five-dollar posters in L.A. just a few years ago) than at the Museum of Modern Art (which was started by Alfred Barr, who was personally acquainted with many of the masters of early twentieth-century art). The Modern, despite its distinguished history, is nowadays so full of crowds that the most it can tell us about Warhol is that he's a popular success. This we already knew. At Gagosian, a space with the aura of a secular shrine, the ante is upped. We're told that Warhol can transcend the bread and circuses—that he's a candidate for Parnassus.

These games of presentation look most flagrant when they're played with Pop Art, but I find them in some ways even more disconcerting when they're used to give the Color-field painters of the Sixties and Seventies the eternity-here-we-come treatment. The Kenneth Noland show that was

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at the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries in October and November suggests a slightly different kind of mythmaking process from the one we see operating at Gagosian or Boone; but I don't find the process any less insidious in the way it firmly closes and locks the door on any honest or undogmatic presentation of the history of American art since World War II. The people at Salander-O'Reilly—who have been on the East Side since they opened the gallery in 1976, and have delighted artists and connoisseurs with shows of Constable, Stuart Davis, Arnold Friedman, Alfred Maurer, and others—surely love the Kenneth Noland paintings that they're showing. But the exhibition last fall wasn't an act of love, it was an act of apotheosis.

Salander-O'Reilly, which was formerly located in a rather eccentric but charming duplex space in a town house on Eightieth Street, used the Noland show as the opener for its new, improved digs on Seventy-ninth Street on the corner of Madison Avenue. Their new space has a built-in history—a history that cannot but add luster to Noland's already immense reputation. Twenty East Seventy-ninth Street was for many years the location of the Paul Rosenberg Gallery. The first Rosenberg Gallery, founded by Paul's father, Alexandre, opened in Paris in 1878, and showed Cézanne, Degas, Monet, and Pissarro. In the various galleries that the son operated in London and Paris in the early years of the century, he continued his father's tradition of support for the avant-garde. Paul Rosenberg became very closely associated with Picasso's work and career around the time of World War I, when Picasso lived a stone's throw from Rosenberg's gallery on the rue de la Boétie. In 1940 Paul Rosenberg, fleeing the Nazis, moved to New York, and his gallery once again flourished. A 1962 guide to New York's galleries, published by *Arts Magazine*, said that the gallery remained "an important source of French painting of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Major exhibitions of French masters are presented each season." If the Rosenberg Gallery has felt a bit dusty, a bit beside the point to those of us who've wandered in in recent years, it was nevertheless one of the major art gallery enterprises of the century. The Rosenberg family collection, which was sold at Sotheby's in London in 1979, contained masterworks by Picasso and Braque as well as very fine things by Matisse, Léger, Degas, and Renoir. It's in this august space that Noland had his recent retrospective, and Salander-O'Reilly has consciously preserved the good-old-days-of-modern-art atmosphere. They've kept the spacious, old-fashioned entry hall and the curving staircase. The gallery spaces proper have a fresh, white look, and the floors have been scraped; but the one big room downstairs and the two big rooms upstairs send a message of continuity: these legendary rooms will host legends again.

Salander-O'Reilly presented three decades of Noland's work in a non-chronological display, so that each of the three rooms was like a mini-retrospective unto itself. If only Noland were up to the gilt-edged local history. All I see in his work are tired effects—these paintings feel as out-of-date as the designer sheets and pillowcases of a decade ago. Here are the Target paintings from 1958 to 1960, each with its single configuration of concentric circles painted in washy hues that bleed into the unprimed canvas. Here are the elongated horizontal paintings of the Sixties, with their stripes in go-together colors. Here are the asymmetrically shaped canvases of the late Seventies and Eighties, with their harsh, flat, poster-paint-toned fields. And here are the newer works, in which the surfaces turn milky with coagulations of acrylic medium. In the newest paintings, named *Doors* after the vertical rectangular elements that Noland uses as modular units, there's a mini-surprise: affixed to some of the edges are strips of candy-colored plexiglas. Forget that there's no subtlety to any of Noland's color. There isn't even any punch to it. He doesn't know how to weight colors in relation to one another; nor does he know how to use colors

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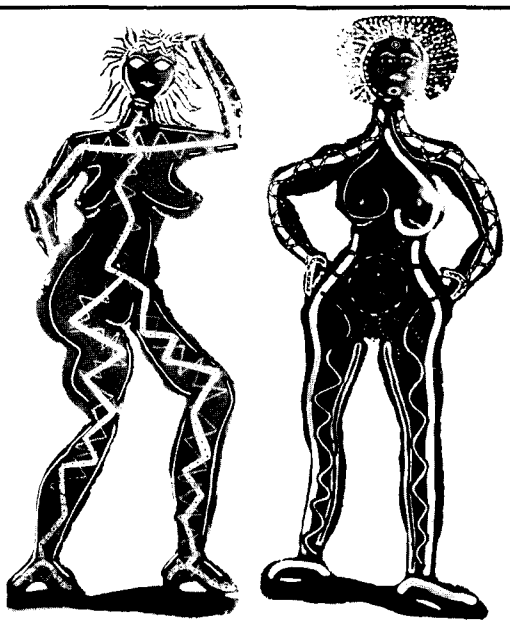
to achieve a sense of weightlessness. A dull literalness prevails.

All of Noland's work goes together, and all of it goes nowhere. You can't move into these paintings in the way you can move into premodern paintings. And the paintings don't come out at you, as modern paintings often do. The Nolands just hang there, inert and marginally decorative.

Not all legends are possible at all times. It wouldn't be worth bothering to describe the deluxe treatment that Kenneth Noland received at Salander-O'Reilly (when has Noland not gotten deluxe treatment?) if it weren't symptomatic of a new kind of attention that's focusing on the group of artists whose careers first flourished in the Sixties under the rubric of formalism. I don't see any mystery as to why artists like Noland and Jules Olitski and Anthony Caro—who early on were admired and discussed by Clement Greenberg—are just now finding their reputations dusted off and given a fresh shine. These artists were championed from the start as purists: they were supposed to be single-minded in their devotion to a rather old-fashioned idea of the Beautiful. As we enter the Nineties, that very idea of a work of art presenting a beautiful, self-contained world has eroded terribly. Eclecticism rules, and it isn't a creative or liberating eclecticism. This is a period of constricting eclecticisms—eclecticisms at once ditzy and dogmatic that turn into orthodoxies overnight and produce tired jokes (Koons) and emotional blackmail (Kiefer). I know why some people who are disaffected with the current situation find solace in Noland's stripes: his art isn't eclectic, isn't emotional, isn't a joke. But I feel a little wary of people who are so disaffected that they'll accept the closed-down horizons of an artist like Noland who refuses to risk anything at all.

And it's not just the fuddy-duddies who are climbing onto the back-to-formalism bandwagon. My sense is that this is a cross-generational movement, and that the appreciation of younger artists and critics



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may be giving Noland's reputation a lift without which Salander-O'Reilly's legend-building, no matter how well funded, will never fly. While the Noland show was at Salander-O'Reilly, the Max Protetch Gallery in SoHo hosted the new paintings of David Reed. With their thick yet translucent surfaces and candy colors these canvases look an awful lot like reruns of the formalist thing. This is significant. Reed may not be a subject of media gossip like Ashley Bickerton or Sherrie Levine, but in SoHo the forty-three-year-old artist is held in far greater esteem than Bickerton or Levine, and his work may actually be as widely discussed as theirs. Reed is a sort of guru to a whole bunch of artists who want to go beyond eclecticism and irony but don't know how.

Reed is currently using juicy, saturated colors—the kind of high-voltage purples and pinks and greens that people like Olitski have long favored. He works layers of paint over the canvas to create overlapping waves or ribbons of color—the kind of 3-D effects with which many of the Color-field artists (Bannard, Poons, Olitski, Noland) are involved. Reed's surfaces are agitated yet static—this also recalls Color-field. But at the same time, Reed subdivides most of his canvases into discrete rectangular areas, in each of which different colors swoon against one another. Thus he violates the unity of the field; and Color-field painting takes on a dialectical dimension. This dialectic is the spice of postmodern irony that Reed mixes with his formalist recipes to make a neat balance between Sixties purism and Eighties anti-formalism. He tells us something about where we are now: the artists who become intellectual heroes in SoHo don't innovate, they mediate. Reed's new-wave formalism is sterile. The downtown flight from eclecticism and irony proves to be as self-limiting as the downtown eclecticism and irony were in the first place.

While Reed won't give up the pose of the Eighties ironist entirely, some of his paintings could comfortably hang next to the Nolands at Salander-O'Reilly. One tall, vertical Reed is positively Nolandesque. In the Reed there are three narrow vertical color areas: the right ones of pink and black, swirled together with whitish paint goop; the left one swirling by itself in pink and blue goop. It is like those Nolands with three or so panels, which also have grayed color—deadened brights. I think Reed makes these connections to Sixties formalist abstraction consciously, though he probably doesn't have any particular Noland or Olitski painting in mind. Reed wants history on his side; and, after all, Noland is in the history books, he's *there*. Reed has positioned himself niftily. He has an immense appeal for artists in their thirties who want to reject the anything-goes-if-it-sells ethic of the art schools. Reed is a man who stands above the fray, who makes "beautiful," "sensuous" paintings about painting. Reed is a faux traditionalist, but by relating his work, visually if not verbally, to the Color-field painters, who are the original faux traditionalists, he gives himself a history, abets their legend, and puts himself in line for legendary status.

Reed and his friends like to talk up the work itself with a blitz of art-historical references; this process recalls the art-historical talk that often accompanies the work of the Color-field painters and a sculptor associated with them, Anthony Caro. These artists are shameless about hitching themselves to the stars. In a recent interview in the *Journal of Contemporary Art*, Larry Poons said of Noland: "There is never a Minimalist feeling to a Noland painting. Even though all the means seem to be, superficially at least, all Minimalist, the result is never Minimalist. It's *Maximized*. It's *Maximalism*—like Rembrandt." It's from this kind of outrageously aggrandizing comparison that Reed and company have learned a thing or two. The undulating movements in Reed's paintings are invariably compared to the rhythms in Mannerist and Baroque painting and architecture: Guido Reni came up in connection with the recent David Reeds. These formal connections are schematic at best. It's a mistake to imagine that by recalling a classic composi-

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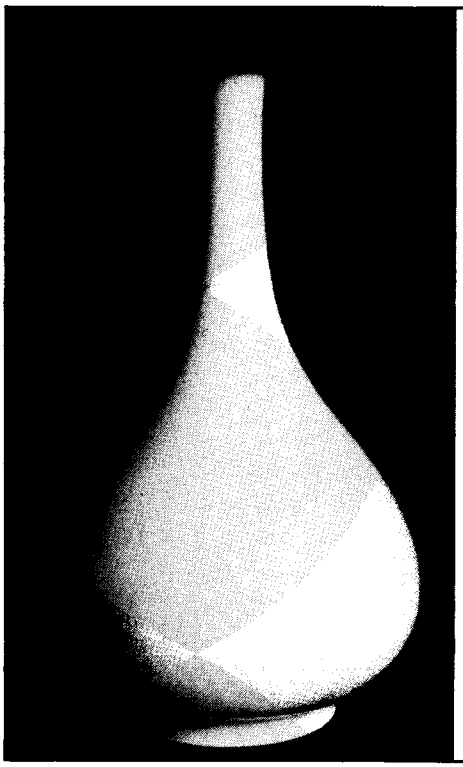
tion or a particular style of brushwork it will be possible to summon the power of the art of the museums. Anthony Caro has taken to modeling his compositions after those of the masters. He does works based on Greek pediments, and he caused something of a stir last spring with a sculpture that was based on Rubens's *Descent from the Cross*. But Caro, like Reed, is incapable of inserting meaning into his work by invoking somebody else's compositions. All both artists manage to do is create a sort of art-historical perfume that wafts around their work and that, in Caro's case, undercuts the distinctive sense of form his welded constructions once had. These artists pursue the old masters the way manufacturers of kitchen products pursue the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.

In the legend business, memories can be very short. Amidst the rampant careerism that gripped SoHo in the Eighties, no one seemed to recall the stranglehold that the formalists (who were consummate careerists) had on taste fifteen or twenty years ago. Amazingly, there appears to be a certain protectiveness developing around these artists—as if, because the art magazines no longer run interminable features about Noland or Olitski or Caro, the "perfect" taste that they represented has somehow been done an injustice. And now an artist such as Noland or Caro emerges as a logical cause to be championed by people who think that the art world has gone to hell but who would like to believe that things were hunky-dory not too long ago. What delightfully formidable credentials these underdogs have! Those who spruce up Noland's or Caro's reputation can point to lists of permanent collections and museum exhibitions that include every major venue in the civilized world. Very few people would care to imagine that the museums had already lost their way in the Sixties, when they started wasting their money on Color-field paintings. This is too painful to contemplate. People want to convince themselves that things went a little off in the art scene, but that we can easily get back on track. That



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—Jed Perl, *Vogue*

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tradition that Clement Greenberg and his followers sketched out—it ran from Picasso to Pollock then on to, oh, maybe Noland and Olitski—well, they're going to get it back on track. That's the message at Salander-O'Reilly. That's the tradition that David Reed wants to fit into.

Any call for a return to orthodox modernism has a great appeal. The less rational the art world appears to be, the more desperate becomes the desire to rationalize aesthetic experience. But the people who want to return us to a time when art was described in the absolutist language of papal bulls pose as much of a danger as the people who now describe art as a barometer of psychosexual and sociopolitical trends. When Larry Poons explains to us that Noland and Rembrandt are related, he's constructing a simplified (to say the least) view of historical progression. (The legend-builders at Salander-O'Reilly are doing something similar. After the Noland show went down, a show of works by Delacroix, Constable, and Rubens went up. Those old masters became, perhaps through no conscious intent of the gallery, more glorious relations for Noland.) Poons is a cartoon traditionalist, opposing his values to those of the cartoon avant-gardists. Whichever side wins, art will lose. Art lives off the art of the museums, all right; but it lives in a perpetual state of indecision and awe and despair. Being involved with the past has nothing to do with a Color-field painter's pieties. It's more of a quest than that. Here's Giacometti—as recorded by James Lord: "My taste gets worse every day. I've been looking at a book in which paintings are reproduced next to photographs. There was a portrait by Fouquet next to a photo of a real person, and I preferred the photo by far. Yet I like Fouquet very much." This is real talk about tradition. But a lot of tasteful people might be terrified to voice feelings like Giacometti's today. Say you like a photo better than a Fouquet and you'd be accused of succumbing to Camp or pop taste. Yet if we can't risk loving what's beyond the museum, whatever will the museum mean?

The people who write about Kenneth Noland, from Clement Greenberg on down, present themselves as a tough-minded lot. They talk in dicta, they bully us with absolutes and near-absolutes—"pure color," "the exclusively visual," "more profound," "this summit of achievement," "a new level of engagement," "like Mozart's, Noland's originality . . ."—I quote virtually at random from the essays in the Salander-O'Reilly catalogue. Yet isn't there something desperate and choked-up about all of this tough talk? It is dangerous to look to art for a defense against uncertainty. One can end up defended against art itself. I read Clement Greenberg's essay on Noland (a 1960 piece that's reprinted in the Salander-O'Reilly catalogue) after seeing the show, and found it almost surreal. What a torrent Greenberg unleashes in support of these dull paintings. "The insistence on the purely visual," he explains, "and the denial of the tactile and ponderable remain in tradition—and would not result in convincing art did they not . . . . [Morris] Louis and Noland are not only far more fertile in invention [than Sam Francis]; the quality of their art is also more upsetting, more profound." All this pushing, all these aggressive words. Keeping up with the Joneses, passing the Joneses: it adds up to the invention of a legend. There's no end to the fruitless search for the absolute. The drearier the painting, the more absolute it appears: this is why Noland and Johns go to the top of the heap. And yet everything that we have felt in art since Wold War II has been pointing us away from the absolute. Art, it seems to me, is a sort of ultimate uncertainty. Art keeps critiquing the legends.

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Books

The Nizan case

by Renee Winegarten

Paul Nizan (1905-1940), essayist and novelist, has become the stuff of a legend that can be made to serve dubious causes. A committed Communist, he left the Party after the notorious Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 to become the victim of calumnies spread by his erstwhile comrades. Cut down in his prime during the fall of France in 1940, he was rescued from oblivion twenty years later. His resurrection in 1960 and his apotheosis in 1968 are being sustained now by a constant stream of literary and political studies. Can the mood last? Probably it can, so long as there are people who think violent revolution is a good thing.

Familiarly known as Jean-Paul Sartre's schoolboy friend and brilliant fellow student at the elite Ecole Normale Supérieure, Nizan owes the revival of his reputation to the self-flagellating author of *Les Mots*. It was Sartre who, while on a visit to Castro's Cuba in 1960, completed his resounding preface to Nizan's angry anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist pamphlet, *Aden Arabie* (first published nearly thirty years earlier, in 1931), and set the ball rolling. A reviewer in 1960 echoed Sartre by hearing in Nizan's words "the voice of our youth .... Over our bent heads, Nizan speaks to the young people of to-day." In his preface Sartre himself was addressing the disaffected younger generation, seeking to capture their waning attention through his portrait of his dead friend as an angry young man passionately in revolt against a dastardly bourgeois society.

Nizan and Sartre were once inseparable and sufficiently indistinguishable to be known as Nitre and Sarzan; as students, both were ambitious to make their literary mark. Nizan reached the public first, becoming well known as a Communist pamphleteer, political journalist, and reporter, as well as a literary critic, reviewer, and novelist. It was Nizan, already established as a writer, who made every effort to find a publisher for Sartre's early works. Yet they became less intimate after 1927, when Nizan joined the French Communist Party, while Sartre remained—as Simone de Beauvoir would like to say afterward—apolitical, though in fact he was already a leftist sympathizer.

In his review of Nizan's best novel, *La Conspiration* (1938)—which treats with sharp irony a group of students engaged in would-be revolutionary conspiracy—Sartre queried: "Can a Communist write a novel?" And he answered his own question: "I am not convinced of this: he does not have the right to become the accomplice of his characters." It is Michael Scriven's interesting thesis in his provocatively titled book, *Paul Nizan: Communist Novelist*,[1] that such a project was indeed achieved by Nizan, at a particular historical moment (the Thirties) and with considerable subtlety. For Nizan strove to blend political ideology and existential *angst*—as he saw it, a union

1 *Paul Nizan: Communist Novelist*, by Michael Scriven; St. Martin's Press, 200 pages, $35.

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between Lenin "the statesman" and Dostoevsky (whose influence on Nizan was considerable, and most evident in *La Conspiration*).

In his eagerness to refute Sartre's literary standpoint, which he regards as "misguided," Mr. Scriven, a lecturer in French at the University of Bath, does not probe the extraordinary incongruity of this strange brew of Nizan's. After all, the whole tendency of Dostoevsky's attitude toward the nihilist conspiracy in *The Possessed* is to satirize and denounce the revolutionary conspirators—those little Lenins in embryo—who would offer humankind, through materialist revolution, a stone instead of spiritual bread. Nizan may ridicule his own student revolutionaries but, unlike the mature Dostoevsky who issued from the house of the dead, he is serious about the merit of violent revolution itself, and he thoroughly approves of the materialist aims of the Bolsheviks.

Whatever his admiration for Nizan's skills, Michael Scriven hedges his bets at the end, finding "the destiny of Nizan's Communist novels" to be "uncertain." The author of *La Conspiration* had published two earlier works of fiction: the dark and powerful *Antoine Bloyé* (1933); and the "socialist realist" *Le Cheval de Troie* (1935), a book which has rarely found much favor. Mr. Scriven reveals his own political hand by declaring that part of Nizan's real significance lies in his "commitment to work towards revolutionary objectives." It may be doubted whether such commitment has much to do with literary merit. But an evaluation of Nizan's three novels as works of literature does not appear to be the author's prime concern. His book proves most valuable in its detailed study of the relation between Nizan's attitudes and the twists and turns of the French Communist Party line—from opposition to socialists and liberals to union with them in the Popular Front, from anti-Nazism to acceptance of an alliance with Nazism. This study is instructive—in a manner that perhaps the author did not quite intend.

In brief, was Nizan a Communist novelist, as Michael Scriven would have it, or a Communist who wrote novels? The distinction is vital. Albert Camus, who had been a member of the Algerian Communist Party from 1935 to 1937 (when he was expelled after a change in the Party line toward Algerian nationalism), favored the second hypothesis. In his remarkable review of *La Conspiration*, published in *Alger républicain* in November 1938 (a piece to which Mr. Scriven does not allude, although it is listed in the bibliography), Camus declared that a writer has to be judged by the effects of his political commitment, that is, by its effects upon his literary work. "Nizan . . . the provocative partisan, is a true writer and proves it, in works from *Les Chiens de garde* ["Watchdogs," an essay-pamphlet against so-called bourgeois culture published in 1932] to *La Conspiration*. Nizan does not sacrifice the artist to the partisan," wrote Camus, who chose to overlook the figure of Carré, the "good Communist," in Nizan's novel.

Nizan himself was too intelligent and too cultivated to be unaware of the clash presented by an allegiance to divergent political and aesthetic aims. He became ultimately more concerned to write novels that would "last" rather than *romans à thèse*. For one so haunted by death as he was (partly due to the loss of his sister when she was only six years old), the prospect of literary survival was a matter of extreme importance and urgency. Writing about André Malraux, whom he deeply admired, Nizan observed: "The novelist is not a man who proves something. Proof excludes art." He himself—like Malraux—was concerned with art, not propaganda, in *La Conspiration*. This was indeed a turnabout, because Nizan the young militant had formerly proposed in a polemic that "all literature is propaganda. For us, art is what makes propaganda effective." In the end, the true writer predominated. Speaking of *La Conspiration*, Camus noted Nizan's power to evoke cityscape or landscape, in descriptions of Paris or the island of Naxos. When Nizan

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writes of Naples in that work, he conjures its "façades made of sugar and nougat" with delicate accuracy.

The Communist ideology that underpins Nizan's fiction might generously be regarded as no more than the novelist's point of view: decline of the West; destructiveness and hollow falsity of the bourgeoisie and its hypocritical culture; urgent need for human beings to be able to live a more meaningful, joyous, and heroic life; eulogy of "the new man" and the new order; professed hope in the underdog and the future—in short, the commonplaces whose emotive power has proved so long-lasting, some of which were shared in the 1930s between Left and Right.

A problem of toleration may occur whenever an author holds a belief that is not shared by the reader. A person who enjoys the "Catholic" novels of François Mauriac, say, need not be an adherent of the Catholic faith, and the same kind of liberality might in principle be extended to Nizan's Communism. In either case, the standards of judgment would be those of art, and religion or ideology would take second place. Nizan himself, it must be said, would not have welcomed such liberality. For most of his life, he was striving hard to project himself as the fanatically ruthless militant.

It is interesting that French Communist reviewers were never really happy with Nizan's novels, which they tended to damn with faint praise. He might stress the need for joy and richness in living but on the whole his fictional works were not tonic, and their conclusions were never positive and upbeat enough to satisfy the Communist hacks. Moreover, the French Communists do not seem to have been really happy with Nizan himself, however loudly he proclaimed his Breton peasant ancestry and proletarian credentials, or assailed his bourgeois connections. Wariness about this brilliant intellectual persisted even after he had proved his subservience by attacking, when told to do so, a leading author (Henri Barbusse, momentarily out of favor), and after his period of active militancy as a philosophy teacher at Bourg-en-Bresse, where he engaged in activities that damaged his teaching career.

In 1934, Nizan spent a year in the Soviet Union under the auspices of the French Communist Party, but he did not tread the red carpet there. He and his wife were lodged in an isolated hotel on the outskirts of Moscow. Nizan had eulogized the Soviet Union before his departure; once there, he sustained the role of passionate adherent and preacher for the cause. With Louis Aragon—ever the favorite—and others, Nizan was one of the French delegates to the Congress of Soviet Writers in the autumn of 1934, but he was not among the speakers. It was Malraux who challenged Zhdanov's presentation of the Stalinist line on writers. As for Nizan, he remained in the shadow of eminent fellow-travellers like Malraux, Gide, and Romain Rolland, who received the full treatment.

Significantly, Romain Rolland noted in his diary (a passage not quoted in Michael Scriven's book): "The two prominent writers who have joined the Party are Aragon and Nizan. It does not look as if Nizan has much cause to congratulate himself for doing so. He has found more duties than privileges and even consideration. He said bitterly: 'They will end by making us feel sorry that we joined the Party: should we stay outside it to be appreciated?' For they do not take him seriously as a writer." Clearly, Nizan's bitterness was well founded.

It seems extraordinary now that Nizan actually expected or hoped that his belief in Soviet Communism would help him to cope with death, to exorcise his terror of mortality. Simone de Beauvoir recounts that he had talked to young Russians on the subject, and had been shocked to discover that each person was aware of dying alone in the "new" society as well as in the old. On his return to Paris, according to another witness, Nizan talked less about Marxism and more about Heidegger and death. He had thus actually supposed that the "new" life, the so-called caring communion of Soviet Russia, would provide the answer to his metaphys-

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ical anguish. Like many of his contemporaries, Nizan was in search of a spiritual home. Paradoxically, his materialistic Communist belief was basically religious or spiritual in character: it followed in a direct line from his youthful adherence to the Catholic faith of his devout mother, and from his early desire to convert to Protestantism, a notion promptly quashed by the family.

The reasons given by Carré, the Communist militant in *La Conspiration*, for commitment to the cause are illuminating in this regard: "Communism is a form of politics but it is also a style of life," to be compared with the Church. Socialists meet and talk about politics and elections and afterward that is an end of it—"all of that does not govern their breathing, their private life, their personal loyalties, their idea of death and of the future. They are citizens. They are not men." When the writer Régnier (said to be modeled on Barbusse) wonders how a critical intellectual can accept Party discipline, Carré replies: "What an incorrigible liberal you are, faithless to man!" The question of loyalty overcomes doubt or criticism, Carré declares. Nizan's stress on "being a man," or being fully human, is plainly allied to a similar concern of Malraux's, though more closely linked to Communist ideology.

It may be supposed that, for a good while, loyalty overcame doubt or criticism in Nizan himself, the intellectual familiar with Greek philosophy and literature. During his stay in the USSR he swallowed Stalin's version of the assassination of Kirov (a murder for which the dictator is known to have been responsible). Whatever his doubts—and he had them—Nizan decided to swallow as well the terrible purges which destroyed millions in order to create the brave new world. He put his faith in a tripartite alliance between the USSR, Great Britain, and France to oppose and defeat fascism and Nazism. Imagine his outrage at the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939! The Soviet invasion of Poland in September of that year was the last straw—"an unacceptable implementation of *realpolitik*," he called it. Nizan loudly resigned from the French Communist Party—but he insisted that he was still a Communist. The French Communists, with their slavish acceptance of the new Soviet line, aroused his ire: they were insufficiently Machiavellian, he thought; they should have pursued the national interests of the French, just as the Russians pursued theirs.

It should be pointed out that Nizan did not leave the Party because he had seen the light of liberal parliamentary democracy. The distinguished journalist Olivier Todd (who married Nizan's daughter) makes this perfectly clear in his 1976 preface to Nizan's bald account of the Munich crisis of 1938, *Chronique de septembre*: "But take care . . . Nizan will not become a liberal. He will not renounce Marxism-Leninism. Some may be inclined today to turn him into a virtuous political moralist. In no way is he a guru for 'new philosophers' [the former radicals of the 1960s who came to embrace anti-Communism in the mid-1970s]." Olivier Todd quotes one of Nizan's letters, written in October 1939, after his departure from the French Communist Party: "Basically, I believe I am right: only future events will confirm or reject my position, not arguments of a moral nature. It is not because I believed the Soviet agreement with Berlin to be 'evil' that I took my stand. Rather it is because I thought French Communists were wanting in essential cynicism and in the political power of the lie required to win the greatest benefits from a dangerous diplomatic measure. Why don't they have the daring of the Russians?" (One is tempted to think that he was being ironical on the subject of Communist cynicism and lying—but apparently not.) The militant who had urged in *Aden Arabie* that "we must no longer blush to be fanatical" had not changed in this regard. He would certainly not have fitted alongside those who were later to declare that the god had failed.

The French Communists vented their fury on the renegade. They circulated the calumny that Nizan was a police informer,

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an idea they doubtless drew from the character of Serge Pluvinage in *La Conspiration* and from the theme of betrayal in other writings of Nizan's. Even after their former companion had been killed by a stray bullet when serving as interpreter with the British forces during the debacle of 1940, they continued to vilify his memory.

In April 1947, however, there appeared in *Combat* a protest against slanderous attacks on Nizan entitled "The Nizan Case," signed by Sartre and others. Sartre also wrote a letter to the Communist front organization, the National Writers' Committee, in defense of his dead friend. According to Sartre, it was Aragon who told him that Nizan had given information about the Party to the Ministry of the Interior. Aragon, who had worked with Nizan on the Communist paper *Ce Soir*, was to vilify him in his novel-cycle *Les Communistes* as Orfilat, a portrait he later removed. Yet in the strangely tortured interview that Aragon gave to Annie Cohen-Solal in 1980, published in her book *Paul Nizan: communiste impossible*, he revealed not only his guilt complex about his dead colleague but also his reluctance to abandon his misconceptions, if that is what they were.

What do we really know about Nizan? Much of the information comes from Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Nizan's widow Henriette, and from the man himself in his autobiographical writings. These last have to be treated with even more caution than the account given by Sartre. For Sartre had an axe to grind in depicting the intransigent young leftist militant: this was just the kind of role that (so he came to feel) he himself should have played. He proposes a secretive, death-obsessed young man in torment who used to disappear on binges and return in a drunken stupor. He shows also the figure of the precocious dandy who favored Anglo-Saxon fashions, like the Prince of Wales's plus fours, and who introduced his friends to British and American literature. (Nizan translated Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* into French.)

That Nizan was in search of a cause is evident not only from his early religious

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quests but also from his short-lived adherence to Le Faisceau, the first genuine French fascist party, founded by Georges Valois. When he joined the Communists, therefore, Nizan had to convince himself as well as his public that he had finally reached home, and that he was fanatically committed to his chosen faith in a world he tended to see in Manichean terms.

Nizan's account of a father's dim existence and decline in his novel *Antoine Bloyé*—which is often taken for an accurate picture of his own father's decay and fall—might be seen as the novelist's necessary myth. Sartre keenly observed that Nizan is speaking endlessly about himself in *Antoine Bloyé*, and projecting his own feelings onto the father figure. "Was Nizan's father," Sartre inquired, "really this whining deserter?" Nizan, in revolt against his background and elite education, is angrily settling scores, stressing the virtues of strength and community among proletarians, virtues that Antoine Bloyé has rejected for an empty upward mobility into the sterile bourgeois class whose members finally use him as a scapegoat. Nizan's father, a hardworking railway engineer, had been held responsible in a scandal about malfunctioning shells during the 1914-18 War, and had been demoted. Apparently, he had never recovered from his fall. Antoine Bloyé's terrible decline, his obsession with futility and death and his lonely end, are the expression of Nizan's private terrors. The father's life is depicted as a series of wrong choices (including his rejection of a proletarian love for a loveless marriage with a pious bourgeoise) and as the betrayal of his own class for a mess of pottage, for the illusion of status. "I am a traitor then," thinks Bloyé. "And he was," is the novelist's icy comment.

Hence Nizan's insistence upon his origins among the Breton peasants. Though born in Tours, in central France, he always waxed eloquent on the subject of his Breton forebears, upon the landscape of Brittany, its Celtic myths and poetry—a region noted for piety and extremism. "I am a French peasant," proclaimed this gifted young intellectual unconvincingly in *Aden Arabie*. It is scarcely surprising that Nizan could not quite satisfy himself or others on that theme. He had, besides, married Henriette Alphen, who came of a well-known, well-to-do, and long established French Jewish family (her father was a composer and banker, while Isaac Strauss, her great-grandfather, had been a noted musician at the court of Napoleon III). Moreover, Nizan was for a time dependent on his wife's family, and the couple lived in the Alphens' Parisian home. He did not repay them very generously in his acid portrayal of the wealthy and superficially cultivated Rosenthal ménage in *La Conspiration*. (Nizan the Marxist had proved equally unkind in *Aden Arabie* to the businessman who had employed him as tutor to his son in Aden and had trusted him sufficiently to offer him a post with his own firm.)

In tone, *La Conspiration* is a strange novel. Apparently, it was to have a sequel, but we are told that the manuscript was buried in 1940 and has not been found. It is in many ways consciously derivative, directly recalling not only the sinister conspiracy in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* but also the lost and decadent young men to be found in *Les Déracinés* (1897), the immensely influential novel by Maurice Barrès. (The transfer of the body of Jaurès, the murdered socialist leader, to the Panthéon in Nizan's book is a clear echo of Victor Hugo's funeral procession in Barrès's once celebrated novel.) The form of Nizan's story, in the shape of letters, diaries, and notebooks, invites comparison with Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, with its intimations of youth at risk, a work in its turn much influenced by Dostoevsky's masterpiece.

As Camus remarked, *La Conspiration* puts Nizan himself as well as his generation on trial. Nizan's conspirators are counterfeiters of a different kind from Gide's. They present negative aspects of romantic revolutionary commitment. One cannot help wondering what this says about Nizan's deepest and perhaps unconscious intentions, if one abides by the injunction to trust the tale rather than the teller. That Nizan should

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have become a model for the young romantic revolutionaries of the generation of 1968 cannot but seem profoundly ironic.

La Conspiration presents a group of students at the Ecole Normale Supérieure who found a review called *La Guerre civile*, thus announcing to the world their aim to terrorize and to create civil strife. On its cover is a machine gun. What could be more modishly revolutionary? (In 1923 Sartre and Nizan had collaborated on their own magazine, *La Revue sans titre*, to which Nizan had contributed a piece entitled "Complaint of the student who dissected his sweetheart while smoking two packets of Virginia cigarettes.") The ringleader, Bernard Rosenthal, urges a friend to commit himself to the conspiracy by engaging in espionage for the Communist Party at considerable personal risk. As the novelist Régnier tells Rosenthal, his behavior is that of a swine ("salaud"). Rosenthal replies in Nizan's anti-moralistic tones: "Moral scruples! What is this ethic for pimps?" All this terrorist ruthlessness fades, however, when Rosenthal falls in love with Catherine, his brother's wife, or thinks he does, and has an affair with her. This amour dominates his attention to such a degree that his interest in the conspiracy wanes.

The affair is discovered, the frivolous Catherine returns to her bourgeois husband, and Rosenthal kills himself. But not before he and his friend Laforgue have reported to the Communist Party secretariat their suspicions about Serge Pluvinage, the only one of their number to have joined the Party. They believe—rightly—that Pluvinage has betrayed Carré, the upstanding Communist militant who is in hiding from the police in Régnier's home. Pluvinage himself feels that he has never been accepted: he suffers from an inferiority complex, envying the cultural ease of his fellows. For him, revolution appears to offer a chance to assuage his deep resentment. It is partly because his student companions have made him feel an outsider that he betrays Carré to the police.

Nizan's student revolutionaries are the "uprooted" of the era after the 1914-18 War, as Barrès's students were the uprooted of the period after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. They do not foresee the dark consequences of their conduct, and they are the butt of their author's bitter irony. If Nizan believed that the last authentic heroism was that of revolution, he was portraying a tragi-comic shadow-play on the theme of revolution in his last novel. Its tone and import remain disconcerting.

Camus was surely on the mark when he wrote of Nizan (and himself?) that it is difficult to distinguish a man's "private play-acting from the deep instinct that governs his acts." Nizan was (as Camus remarked) a writer of considerable gifts: but he never had the chance to fulfill his potential. There is no point in saying that Communism warped his talent, because we do not know what that talent would have been without the sustaining ideology. Somehow, Nizan expected a raw deal from fate, and that is what he received. No amount of huffing and puffing about blending Lenin and Dostoevsky, or about his contribution to the ongoing revolutionary cause, can take Nizan out of the shadow of Malraux, Sartre, or Camus. Because of that stray bullet, he remains fixed as one of the offspring of the years of delusion, a source of mingled fascination, irritation, and sorrow.

The idea man

Julian Barnes A History of the World in 10½ Chapters. Knopf, 307 pages, $18.95

reviewed by Bruce Bawer

Lewis was always more of an idea man than a character-man.
—Julian Barnes on C. S. Lewis (1977)

In America these days, the most-travelled route to literary success passes through the creative-writing programs, where would-be novelists read Ann Beattie and learn how to

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turn their middle-class suburban childhoods into earnest, inert, and carefully crafted fictions. The corresponding route in Britain traverses a strikingly different territory: from Oxford and Cambridge, it leads directly to literary London, where aspiring novelists apply their public-school cockiness and liberal educations to irreverent, arrogantly slapdash pieces for publications like *The Literary Review* and *The London Review of Books*, thereby preparing themselves for the production of smart, vibrant, often untidy fictions which may be inspired by anyone from Laurence Sterne to Evelyn Waugh.

Among the English novelists who have trod this well-worn path to glory is the Leicester-born, Oxford-educated, forty-three-year-old Julian Barnes. His literary journalism of the late Seventies proved Barnes to be more than adequately keen, versatile, and impudent for the job: he reviewed everyone from Heinrich Böll to Richard Price, and wrote with equal insouciance about censorship, comic books, the royal family, and television (for many years, indeed, he served as a regular television critic for *The New Statesman* and the London *Observer*). Barnes's first two novels, while displaying the requisite Oxbridgean cheekiness, were more or less conventional in form and subject: *Metroland* (1980) was a public-school *Bildungsroman* which reminded reviewers of his fellow Oxonian Martin Amis; *Before She Met Me* (1982) was a marital-problem comedy. Critics praised these novels for their wit and energy, but carped about the flat characters and artificial stories. Wrote Paul Bailey in the *Times Literary Supplement*: "There is a curious lack of people in *Metroland*, for all that their names are mentioned and some of their habits described." And John Mellors argued in *London Magazine* that the hero of *Before She Met Me* "becomes too much of a vehicle for his creator's cleverness."

Barnes might have responded to these objections by working harder, in his third book, to make the *dramatis personae* more full-bodied and their actions more credible. He didn't. What he did instead was to give less prominence than ever to these elements—to devise a work, that is, in which character and story would figure as insignificantly as possible, and in which he would be free to impart his droll, quirky view of life and art in more explicit and idiosyncratic ways. Whether Barnes was consciously altering his literary strategy in order to make the most of his virtues and to minimize his shortcomings, or whether he had from the beginning been groping in the direction of such a literary method, is impossible to say; but the fact is that *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984)—which attracted an extraordinary amount of attention on both sides of the Atlantic and propelled Barnes straightaway into the front ranks of up-and-coming English novelists—represents a decisive break with his earlier ways.

Yet is *Flaubert's Parrot* a novel? Nominally, to be sure, it has those key ingredients of conventional fiction, a protagonist and a plot. Geoffrey Braithwaite is an elderly widowed physician, obsessed with Flaubert (whose character Charles Bovary he resembles in some respects) and eager to hunt down the actual stuffed bird on which the French novelist based his description of Félicité's parrot Loulou in "Un coeur simple." But Braithwaite's story, told in the first person, is only one element in a grab bag of mostly non-narrative materials relating to Flaubert, among them a glossary of his references to animals, an "examination paper" on his fiction, a discussion of Emma Bovary's eye color, and a chronology of his life. Actually, *three* chronologies—one emphasizing the felicitous aspects of his life, another emphasizing the tragic, another consisting of Flaubertian *mots* on life, love, and writing.

Why three chronologies? Because Barnes wants to remind us how easily historical data can be manipulated; he wants us to remember that it is always best to approach accounts of past events with a lively skepticism. And he wants, too, to play an ontological game: the multiple meanings of

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the book's title—which refers not only to the fictional parrot in "Un coeur simple" and to the real bird on which it was modeled, but also to Braithwaite, who frequently parrots his idol's words—adumbrate the book's sportive preoccupation with the different ways in which Flaubert, his creations, and Braithwaite "exist." This levels-of-reality game, of course, is one with which contemporary readers have become familiar through the writings of Nabokov, Borges, Calvino, and other such eminences; like them, Barnes wants to drive home the slipperiness of identity, the difficulty of knowledge. But the game doesn't work quite as well as it should, largely because one never even begins to believe that Braithwaite does "exist." Though the potpourri of Flaubert-related materials is supposed to be his creation, one consistently thinks of it as Barnes's; what's more, the book's suave and spunky (and, incidentally, very un-Flaubertian) narratorial voice sounds far more like that of a young London literary man than like that of an elderly widowed physician. This is not to deny that *Flaubert's Parrot* has its pleasures; it is simply to state that they are the pleasures of a playful literary intellectual's *jeu d'esprit*, not the pleasures of a novel. Even the authors—most of them, anyway—whose words of praise are quoted on the book's dust jacket don't characterize it as a novel: Francis Steegmuller calls it a "Flaubert miscellany"; both Walter Abish and Steven Millhauser label it a "meditation."

Barnes's fourth book, by contrast, is undeniably a novel. *Staring at the Sun* (1986) tells the story of an Englishwoman named Jean Serjeant whose long life, beginning in the early 1920s, is shaped largely by her relationships with a handful of men: her frivolous uncle Leslie, who during Jean's childhood amuses himself by introducing her to various games, riddles, and little-known facts; a sergeant-pilot named Tommy Prosser, who is billeted with Jean's family during World War II, who is able to stare at the sun through slightly parted fingers, and who is nicknamed Sun-Up because once, on a bombing run over France, the speed of his plane allowed him to see the sun rise twice; Michael, a policeman whom Jean marries and deserts; and Gregory, her only child, an unadventurous but very inquisitive lifelong bachelor, who becomes her closest companion. The novel sees Jean into advanced old age in the twenty-first century—a time when everyone takes Happy Pills, when the fear of death can be eliminated surgically, and when an all-inclusive information source called the General Purposes Computer (or GPC) offers a psychotherapeutic, reputedly omniscient function known as The Absolute Truth (or TAT).

Though we follow Jean through a hundred years, however, she remains astonishingly inauthentic. We are apparently supposed to see her as a questing and questioning Everywoman; but her serious queries about life are given no more weight than the silly ones—such as "Why don't Jews enjoy golf?" and "Why is the mink excessively tenacious of life?"—which Uncle Leslie raises during her childhood and which (quite ridiculously) preoccupy her throughout her life. Gregory has questions too—and even some answers: he asserts, for instance, that "[a]ll jobs were boring, but you had to have one, because the point of a job was to make you value the time when you were away from it . . . . Life depended on contrasts, and continued to do so until you ran into the ultimate contrast." And he notes that "[s]uicide wasn't self-abnegation. It didn't say: I am so unimportant that it doesn't matter if I destroy myself. It said the opposite: look, it said, I am important enough to destroy." Informing such reflections is a commendable appreciation of life's mystery, a recognition that the absurdity of human existence does not prevent it from being a serious proposition or undermine the value of ethical conduct or metaphysical conjecture. But the characters behind these remarks rarely seem more than contrivances, puppets swung roughly about by a puppeteer who, in his eagerness to engage Big Questions and to make jokes,

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seems to give little thought to his characters' credibility.

Not that Barnes even pretends to be interested in credibility. Throughout the novel, he traffics in absurdities reminiscent of writers like Kurt Vonnegut and Tom Robbins, proffering silly conceits and seemingly flippant jokes for what we are meant to recognize as serious thematic reasons. The references to staring at the sun culminate, for instance, in the General Purpose Computer's comment to Gregory that it is "impossible to look at either the sun or death without blinking." Like John Irving's *The World According to Garp*, *Staring* aspires to be an energetic, darkly comic contemplation of the very grandest subjects: the wonder of life, the terror of mortality, the problem of evil, the existence of God. In the book's later chapters, Gregory discusses all these matters at length with TAT, and in these passages the book's strengths and weaknesses are both writ large: though extremely sharp-witted and amusing, the exchanges between man and machine sorely lack human dimension. The characters—TAT included—talk too much alike, and about pretty much the same things. Even their cognitive habits are similar: like Braithwaite, both Jean and Gregory have a proclivity for making weighty lists (in her case, a list of seven private wonders of life; in his case, a list of fourteen possible answers to the question of whether God exists). Nor does it help that Barnes's prose is, for the most part, merely plain, serviceable, and journalistic, and that many of his wisecracks about twenty-first-century developments (among them, a line about cigarettes having been pronounced risk-free) are reminiscent of Woody Allen's *Sleeper*.

Barnes's new novel, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, retains *Staring*'s focus on Big Questions while reverting to the hodgepodge structure of *Flaubert's Parrot*. Here, as in that book, fiction co-exists with history, and narration alternates with other forms of discourse. Yet *History* is more ambitious than its celebrated predecessor. For one thing, Barnes has stepped out of Flaubert's shadow; for another, he has expanded his range of styles and tones, materials and techniques. The various chapters of *History* are set in biblical, medieval, and modern times, in Europe, the Americas, Asia Minor, and Australia; their forms vary from the epistolary to the discursive, from a compilation of courtroom testimony to a first-person narrative by a worm. If *Flaubert's Parrot*, moreover, was given at least a semblance of unity by Geoffrey Braithwaite and his quest, *History*—a considerably longer volume with not even a hint of a main plot or a principal character—has only abstract and symbolic elements to hold it together.

One of these elements, interestingly, is the very idea of interconnectedness. In a chapter entitled "The Survivor," a woman watches a pair of reindeer butting heads on television: "It was horrible, she thought, yet we ought to face it. Everything *is* connected, even the parts we don't like, especially the parts we don't like." The book's foremost emblem of this connection is Noah's Ark—a graphic embodiment of the idea that all of us, man and animal alike, are together on this precarious voyage of life, huddled against a menacing world (and against the menace that we represent to one another) and trying to survive. The Ark appears frequently in *History*: the first chapter, "The Stowaway," constitutes a pointedly revisionistic recollection by a woodworm of his experience with Noah and family; "The Mountain" rehearses the 1839 visit to Mount Ararat of a young Englishwoman to pray for the soul of her godless, recently deceased father; and "Project Ararat" tells of an astronaut's efforts to find the Ark's remains. The book teems, too, with what one might call failed Arks: "The Visitors" recounts the story of a group of present-day European tourists in Crete held hostage on their cruise ship by Arab terrorists; "Shipwreck" describes the wreck of the French frigate *Medusa* in 1816; "Three Simple Stories" includes an ironic anecdote about a *Titanic* passenger and an account of the travails of German Jewish

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refugees who left Hamburg for Havana on the ill-fated cruise ship *St. Louis* in 1939.

Time and again in *History*, individuals learn that life is a lottery: the animals on the Ark are either spared or chosen for slaughter, the raft-bound *Medusa* crewmen are permitted to stay or are cast overboard, the hostages in Crete end up being slain or liberated. Such events remind us, too, that twentieth-century man is every bit as brutal as his forebears; in this regard, anyway, history is circular, a fact repeatedly symbolized here by circling ships and by the recurrent appearance of the woodworm, a creature which shares both man's destructiveness and his tenacity. In such a calamitous world, is there any hope? Yes, in the form of love—which Barnes extols, in a pensive, autobiographical-sounding section called "Parenthesis," as "an ark, but one on which anthropophagy is rife." The rare, embattled nature of love is underlined by the fact that it gets only this unnumbered "half-chapter," while the destructive powers of the earth are accorded the other ten.

Not that Barnes's "Parenthesis" focuses only on love. He also talks about history: "History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us." This is, of course, a popular notion nowadays among academic intellectuals; but Barnes, while vigorously retailing his own fanciful version of history, rejects a blanket, deconstructionist-style denial of the possibility of knowledge. Even as we know that objective truth is not obtainable, he writes,

> we must still believe that objective truth is obtainable; or we must believe that it is 99 per cent obtainable; or if we can't believe this we must believe that 43 per cent objective truth is better than 41 per cent. We must do so, because if we don't we're lost, we fall into beguiling relativity, we value one liar's version as much as another liar's, we throw up our hands at the puzzle of it all, we admit that the victor has the right not just to the spoils but also to the truth . . . .
>
> And so it is with love. We must believe in it, or we're lost. We may not obtain it, or we may obtain it and find it renders us unhappy; we must still believe in it. If we don't, then we merely surrender to the history of the world and to someone else's truth.

To each man, then, his own Dulcinea, and his own *History of the World in 10½ Chapters*?

As with its predecessors, the most engaging parts of this book are either expository or argumentative. One thinks especially of Barnes's riff, in "Parenthesis," on Auden's line "We must love one another or die," and his fascinating discussion, in "Shipwreck," of Géricault's famous painting of the *Medusa*'s raft-bound survivors—a subject which gives Barnes an opportunity to ruminate reflexively on the nexus between real events and the art works that are based on them. Barnes even tells a couple of good stories: "The Visitors" and "Upstream!" (which chronicles an obnoxious young movie star's experiences on an ill-fated Amazonian film shoot) are both fast-moving and neatly ironic, if lacking in depth and nuance. Glibness also plagues the book's last chapter, "The Dream," though it is nonetheless admirable for its inspired, wittily executed vision of a democratic Heaven whose rewards are tailored to each individual soul; the chapter nicely conveys the notion that we make not only our own dreams but our own realities, and cannily suggests that all of us, if we did happen to be rewarded in the end with the eternal perfection of Heaven, would eventually opt for oblivion out of sheer boredom. Why? Because, Barnes intimates, mankind is neither perfect nor perfectible. As the protagonist of "The Dream" concludes: "Heaven's a very good idea, it's a perfect idea you could say, but not for us. Not given the way we are." Yet if the reality of Heaven would be unlivable, the dream of it is vital: "you can't get by without the dream." Barnes draws exemplary distinctions between dreams (which we need) and illusions (which we're better off without), between healthy skepticism and unavailing nihilism.

But much of *History* disappoints. "The

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Stowaway" consists mainly of one tedious joke, dragged on for thirty pages. The chapter opens the book, and its reigning irony—that the entire myth of Noah's Ark is belied by the existence of the tiny woodworm, a creature that would never have been admitted knowingly onto a wooden ship—is evidently meant to foreshadow the book's skeptical stance toward historical (or, in this case, biblical) orthodoxy. Yet the chapter feels forced, derivative; its belaboring of the notion that "man is a very unevolved species compared to the animals" is dreadfully stale, and its tiresome burlesque of Genesis recalls Joseph Heller's vulgar, witless *God Knows*. Equally lackluster are "The Wars of Religion," a painfully whimsical account of a medieval French trial of a woodworm on charges of devouring the leg of a bishop's throne, and "The Survivor," wherein an Australian woman breaks down after a romantic breakup and confuses dream and reality. These chapters—and, for that matter, most of the others in the book—are irredeemably slight; one can't imagine them standing on their own as short stories.

Nor, in the final analysis, do they hang together as a novel. From one chapter to the next, there's little sense of direction or rising tension. The conspicuous, show-offy shifts in form and voice seem arbitrary, even cavalier; and while the grand themes link up satisfactorily enough, one misses the grand vision that is necessary, in so fragmented and uneven a book, to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Though Barnes seeks to communicate urgency, there's little feeling of dire compulsion here, little sense that this book was born of the inexorable pressure of imagination or prophecy. On the contrary, *History* all too often reads like, well, the work of a slick, smart London literary journalist who has read his Nabokov and Borges and *Tristram Shandy* and who yearned to write the most colorful, eclectic, and animated novel of the decade—but who doesn't seem to understand that a history of the world without compelling, three-dimensional people at the heart of it can be a pretty arid affair.

Gertrude & Juliana

Avis Berman Rebels on Eighth Street: Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Atheneum, 539 pages, $24.95

reviewed by Deborah Solomon

At the time of her death in 1948, Juliana Force held the eminent title of founding director of the Whitney Museum of Art. Nowadays, mention of her name is likely to elicit a blank stare or, from the more knowing, a flip remark about Gertrude Whitney's "glorified secretary." While other champions of twentieth-century art (Alfred Stieglitz, Alfred Barr, Betty Parsons, etc.) have by now ascended to mythic heights, Force and her legacy have crumbled into dust. The reason is hardly a mystery. Unlike Stieglitz, she didn't have a discerning eye. Unlike Barr, she lacked a coherent vision. And she didn't have Parsons's instinct for adventure. Yet for all her obvious deficiencies, Force did possess genuine enthusiasm for American art, or rather for American artists, and she helped them win official recognition in an age when society still believed that good art, like good perfume, could only come out of Europe.

How large, exactly, was her influence? Tremendous, according to Avis Berman, the author of *Rebels on Eighth Street: Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art*. The book, the first biography of Force, is essentially a revisionist history of the Whitney: it sets out to show that, while Gertrude Whitney paid the bills, it was Juliana Force who organized the shows, selected the purchases, and defined the direction of the museum in its first two decades. The author, a journalist, is a zealous researcher, and some readers may grow impatient with her detailed discussions of even the most inconsequential matters. Here, for instance, is how she describes a short-lived co-operative gallery Force started in the Thirties: "Any artist was eligible to bring in his work, and 480 of them did so.

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Of these 480, 150 sold 410 pictures, for a total of $4,267.50. The income from commissions amounted to $201.31; for the fifty-five days the gallery was open, expenses came to $1,288.68. Juliana absorbed the deficit of $1,087.37." It hardly needs saying that such information is more fitting for an annual report than a well-crafted biography. Yet despite the author's occasional lapses into triviality, her book as a whole is spirited, engaging, and vastly informative, and will surely stand as the definitive study of its subject.

In Berman's eyes, Juliana Force was an admirable figure, a passionate, irreverent woman who, while sharp-tongued and arrogant, while prone to hysterical outbursts, played a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the achievements of American artists. Yet I don't think it's accurate to call her a "rebel," as Berman does in the title of her book. For the fundamental truth about Juliana Force is that she lived her life in complete subservience to the tastes and whims of her legendary employer. The two women first met in 1906. Force (née Juliana Rieser) was then thirty years old, a secretary with a high-school diploma, the daughter of a failed businessman from Doylestown, Pennsylvania. She wanted desperately to succeed, though at what she wasn't sure. Whitney, by contrast, was already well-known. An heir to the Vanderbilt fortune, she had recently embarked on a career as a sculptor and would soon emerge as the leading patron of American art. At some point she decided to hire a secretary. And so Juliana arrived on her doorstep.

To the girl from Doylestown, Gertrude Whitney was larger than life, a woman of enormous fascination who knew everyone in the Social Register yet preferred to keep company with her clay Pans and Neptunes in her MacDougal Alley studio. Stepping into Whitney's life was like stepping into a fairy tale, and Force was predictably enthralled. As the years progressed and her responsibilities steadily expanded, she never ceased to think of Whitney in glowing, nearly idolatrous terms. Berman describes their relationship as one of mutual admiration, yet perhaps it went deeper. In 1934, while cruising to Europe, Force wrote to Whitney:

> I opened your letter to me. It was a loving & tender letter, but it was also a wise one. The great love for you came back again & flooded my heart & the hardness was no more. Life was not something to be afraid of & somehow it seemed to me important how I lived it.

Berman never raises the question of whether the two women were lovers; presumably they were not. Yet it seems fair to say that Juliana's feelings for her employer went way beyond the usual professional esteem; her relationship with Gertrude may well have been the most vital emotional relationship of her life. Granted, Juliana was not indifferent to men. In 1900, at age twenty-four, she married Willard Force, an affable dentist who liked to spend his leisure hours playing cards and reading detective novels. He was no match for his wife in energy or ambition, and their marriage, which was childless, failed to satisfy her restless nature. Through Gertrude Whitney, Juliana was able to create a much more meaningful marriage, a marriage to the New York art world.

It isn't difficult to understand Force's attachment to Whitney. Yet it is difficult to understand the peculiar leap of logic that led Whitney to entrust Force with the formidable responsibility of assembling an art collection. Force, after all, was not a connoisseur either by training or inclination. What did she have to offer other than her professed "great love" of Whitney? On the other hand, it was never Whitney's intention to assemble an art collection based on superior taste—or, for that matter, to assemble an art collection at all. Instead she wanted, at least initially, to start a kind of Salvation Army of the art world, a place where non-academic artists, who were still treated like social outcasts, could show their work, meet other artists, and feel at home.

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The story of Whitney's entry into art patronage is already well-known. In 1914, she bought an old town house at 8 West Eighth Street and turned it into the Whitney Studio. She and Force worked together planning monthly shows; their selections were notoriously uneven. The accomplishments of Robert Henri, William Glackens, and John Sloan were presented alongside pictures and sculptures by now-forgotten hacks. In 1929, after accumulating about six hundred works purchased from members' exhibitions, Whitney tried to donate her collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and offered to build a wing to house it. The Met flatly declined the offer, so one afternoon Whitney decided to start her own museum, with Force as director. It opened in four adjoining town houses on West Eighth Street in November 1931. The interior was designed to resemble a private home, or rather Force's flamboyant conception of one, which included nymphs frolicking in the niches and hallways festooned with eagles and stars and stripes.

During her two decades at the Whitney, Force was a most enthusiastic director. Yet her enthusiasm was not for art so much as for the activities surrounding it. She liked meeting with artists, organizing committees, speaking on panels. She liked driving up to Woodstock and creating a stir by descending on a dozen studios and purchasing a picture at every stop. She liked throwing lavish openings, then tapping a select few and whisking them off to her private parties. She liked helping artists out of binds, coming to the rescue, purchasing a picture to prevent an eviction. Rather than striving to turn the museum into a model of connoisseurship and erudition, Force was mainly interested in fostering a sense of artistic community. That she played a role in narrowing the gap that had previously obtained between museums and living artists is certain. But to what end? As the years progressed, the Whitney's storage racks became increasingly cluttered with work of the most middling achievement.

This isn't to say that an occasional great painting didn't slip through the Whitney's portals. Force's extravagant shopping sprees yielded, among other things, an estimable group of Precisionist canvases by Charles Sheeler, Joseph Stella, and Ralston Crawford. Yet taken as a whole, her record on acquisitions was singularly unimpressive. Following the lead of Gertrude Whitney, she favored realism over abstraction, and it wasn't until after Force's death that works by American modernists—such as Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, Patrick Henry Bruce, and Oscar Bluemner—were collected by the museum in any depth; the museum didn't acquire its first Dove until 1951. In one of the more byzantine sections of her book, Berman goes to elaborate lengths to show that Force was not anti-modernist, but rather anti-Stieglitz; she found Stieglitz insufferably arrogant and thus refused to support the artists he championed. It hardly needs saying that disliking Stieglitz is a rather lame excuse for ignoring the advent of modernism.

If Force didn't demonstrate particular discernment in acquiring works of art for the museum, she fared even worse in exhibiting them. The shows she organized consistently smacked of rank amateurism. Take, for instance, "This is Our City," of 1940, a survey of cityscapes marred by far more than the uneven quality of the works on view. As Berman reports, "Juliana hung over 200 works and surrounded them with the fussy, charming props she loved. A toy dog was installed near a hydrant, spring flowers bloomed in little carts, and hurdy-gurdies were put in the galleries. Juliana treated the show as an occasion for old-fashioned fun." Old-fashioned fun? One would think she was running a home for orphans. Berman's biography doesn't mention whether Force ever wrote an exhibition catalogue, undertook a research project, or even tried her hand at writing a wall label. But then old-fashioned fun doesn't leave much room for the rigors of scholarship.

In the end, the woman who emerges from these pages doesn't live up to the grand

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claims that Berman makes on her behalf. The reader is told that Force "was pivotal to a transformation of taste that took place in the 1920s and is still very much in evidence today. Through her increasingly influential position, Juliana opened the eyes of Americans to their visual heritage." Did she? How? It was Gertrude Whitney who conceived the idea of supporting living artists, and who defined the ideals of the museum that bears her name. She also, of course, was an avid collector, and gave the museum some of its best works; two sculptures by Gaston Lachaise come immediately to mind. Force, by contrast, was not a visionary but an administrator, and a rather ordinary one at that. True, she dressed with great style, decorated her many homes eccentrically, and could always be counted on for an entertaining evening. Berman amply demonstrates that Force led a colorful life. Yet was it a memorable one? I'm not sure it was. For Force did not shape her times so much as she allowed herself to be shaped by them, and it's hard to imagine that our sense of art would be any different if she had, say, chosen a career in department-store retailing—which, as Berman tells us, she actually considered toward the end of her life.

Berman's book takes the reader up to 1966, when the Whitney moved into the building it now occupies at Madison Avenue and Seventy-fifth Street. She doesn't discuss more recent events. Perhaps she feels that today's Whitney, with its notorious trendiness, bears no relation to its Eighth Street ancestor and thus has no place in her biography. Yet one of the rewards of her book is that it allows us to see that the museum has never really changed. Granted, the plush carpets and sofas are gone, and the days when an artist could run upstairs to the director's office and sell a picture on the spot are history. Yet fundamental similarities remain. The Whitney of today lacks clear purpose. It lends official sanction to the most popular artists while failing to convince us that their work will last. It follows taste rather than creating it. It lives for the moment. It is a symbol of mediocrity. As such, it has remained entirely faithful to the spirit of Juliana Force.

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Letters

Graham Greene's novels

To the Editors:

Bruce Bawer's criticism is generally a pleasure to read. His analysis is perspicacious, thorough, and rational. However, he seems to have seriously gone amiss in his recent examination of Graham Greene's oeuvre. The most troubling aspect of his three-part article [in the September, October, and November 1989 issues] is the manner in which he freely confuses Greene the writer with Greene the man, and uses the failings of the latter as reason for dismissing the former. He allows irritation and exasperation with Greene's personal foibles to cloud his critical discernment. While it may be true that Greene's adoption of Catholicism and left-wing politics has lacked a solid and committed foundation, this cannot be used to prove the point that Greene is a second-rate writer. Mr. Bawer dwells too insistently on matters that are ultimately irrelevant to whether or not Greene is a great writer. Any student of literature learns quickly that there is rarely a correlation between the excellence of a writer's character and the merits of his literary works. The two are, however inexplicable and puzzling, unrelated.

In discussing *The Heart of the Matter*, Mr. Bawer quotes a sentence that he feels illustrates Greene's melodramatic approach to Catholicism. Those familiar with Greene's novels know that he is a writer who cannot be quoted out of context. Taken singly, isolated from the prior passage which it is meant to round out and cap, the quoted segment is bound to appear overdramatized. Furthermore, Catholicism, by its very nature, by its emphasis on sin, guilt, and the mysteries of the cross, is a dramatic and brooding religion. Mr. Bawer seems uncomfortable with this fact. He resents the "dark and difficult knowledge that Catholics share" and is more interested in leveling and homogenizing Catholicism than in deeply probing Greene's fictional approach to its complexities.

There are other infelicities in Mr. Bawer's essay: the cheap Freudian explanation that has Greene replacing Berkhamsted with the Catholic Church and his father with God; and Mr. Bawer's discomfiture with the idea that "the greater one's sins are, the closer one is to God," which leads him to ask what we are to make of someone like Hitler. The link to God is established by the suffering condition of the sinner: the greater the sin, the greater the suffering, and it is the fact of this suffering that brings the person in closer contact with God. By bringing Hitler into the picture Mr. Bawer indulges his own penchant for "melodrama" and "sheer effect."

Finally, it is simply not true that the "average intelligent reader—Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, agnostic, or otherwise" finds it impossible to take Greene's heroes, ergo his books, seriously. Greene's importance as a writer rests with his having engaged the most troubling and tormenting facets of Catholicism and richly dramatized them. *The Heart of the Matter*, *The End of the Affair*, and *The Power and the Glory*—these three novels will assure him a permanent place in the literary canon. The fact that Greene has written entertainments, or that his political and

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religious stances lack conviction, cannot diminish the importance and solidity of his best works, works that continue to be read and appreciated by average as well as exceptional readers.

Marcela Breton
Bethel, CT

To the Editors:

So the news from Bruce Bawer is that Graham Greene has over the years been guilty of flippancy, selfishness, detachment, bordello-hopping, doctrinal impurities, anti-Americanism, an inclination to Marxism, and other improprieties. All of this affects my judgment of him as an artist as much as Picasso's saying that all women were either goddesses or doormats, or Evelyn Waugh's snobbery, or Yeats's authoritarian politics, or Joyce's fondness for soiled female undergarments, or Michelangelo's homosexuality, or Robert Frost's coldness to his children: it has no bearing whatsoever on my judgment of Greene as a novelist.

I do not judge a novel on the basis of either its ideas or its author's personal habits. I think I have read most of what Greene has written and have re-read several of my favorites of his books. If he has limitations, so does every writer; Joyce was incapable of imagining sex without smut, Yeats of imagining a shopkeeper with a soul. If Greene has been inconsistent and contradictory and heterodox in his Catholicism, what readable writer hasn't?

I think Mr. Bawer dislikes Greene's rather haughty British manner. That's his business, but it has nothing to do with artistic values, including Greene's uncanny ability at his best to set a scene and a mood or to cause a paragraph of plain prose suddenly to explode with a single metaphor or twist of phrase. Greene may be more of a reader's writer and a writer's writer than a critic's. He doesn't require explication, only sophistication and aesthetic sensibility.

As for his beliefs and his typical protagonists' dilemmas, I am reminded of something Joyce wrote in a newspaper article in 1909. Referring to the works of Oscar Wilde, Joyce spoke of "the truth inherent in Catholicism: that man cannot reach the divine heart except through that sense of separation and loss called sin." That is heresy, and it strikes home. And it is enough "message" for any novel.

I despise radical-left politics as ardently as Mr. Bawer does, and I agree that the critical establishment is predominantly left-wing and eager to approve left-wing writers. But it is possible to admire both Greene and his old friend Evelyn Waugh, who was about as far to the right as one could get without being pro-Hitler, even as the two men respected each other. We ought to be able to admire both as writers, if we care about wit, mastery of the language, worldliness, and the inexhaustible adventures of the well-told tale. I'll let the Vatican and the State Department worry about the rest of the baggage.

Mr. Bawer seems especially upset by what he calls a lack of logic in Greene's political and religious beliefs. I have yet to meet the political belief that could stand up to a rigorous logic; and as for religion, does one really wish to defend the *logic* of Sainte-Chapelle or Chartres? The Virgin, as surely he recalls, is not a Dynamo. If Graham Greene prefers the rosary to a sewing machine and a character's irrational faith to reality, he is hardly alone among artists.

Darcy O'Brien
Tulsa, OK

Viva Velázquez

To the Editors:

Jed Perl has some harsh and even telling things to say about the megashows at the Metropolitan (always easy game these days) in his piece on Velázquez in the November 1989 issue, but it seems to me that what he would substitute for them would be a sad loss for art lovers.

For he is one who thinks the planning of a show is more important than what is in it. The show *itself* is the work of art, a point of view, alas, all too common among curators today. Indeed, some of them see it as their raison d'être.

To Perl, "Fragonard's butterfly-weight genius deserves butterfly-weight presentation"; only Zurbarán's "Michelangelesque" paintings should be included in a Zurbarán show, and the "slick tricks of Boucher" do not warrant a retrospective

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at all. We must see only what Perl dictates. Well, thank God for Philippe de Montebello is all I can say! I want to see *all* of Fragonard, Zurbarán, and Boucher, or as much as can go up on the Met walls, and I'll make my own judgments, thank you very much.

And as to the factitious pulling together of a show under a heading such as "Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment," what difference does it make? You have the pictures, don't you? You don't have to read the silly theory on the big placards. I've never rented an acoustiguide in my life and never intend to. I read a bio of the artist in the encyclopedia before I go and then I simply *look*. And I bless the great Metropolitan for bringing so many pictures to look at to my doorstep. The only thing I mind in the megashows is the crowds, which get between me and the pictures.

Louis Auchincloss
New York, NY

Jed Perl replies:
Louis Auchincloss imagines that he can approach the collected works of a visual artist the way he approaches the collected works of a literary artist: get all of it together in one place and he'll make up his own mind. But there is no visual-arts equivalent to the collected edition of Jane Austen or Balzac sitting there on the library shelf. From the moment when a painting or sculpture is created it is peculiarly susceptible to its environment, be that a studio, a church, a gallery, a private home, a public building, a palace, a museum. In "Viva Velázquez" I didn't advocate one particular kind of exhibition: far from it. I argued that there are different kinds of exhibitions, and that a museum must be attuned to the differences. One might say that the presentation of a work of art is a working hypothesis about that work of art. I'm somewhat astonished that Mr. Auchincloss, who is an admirer of Henry James and Edith Wharton, gives such short shrift to forms of presentation.

A note: my "Michelangelesque" comment refers to Goya, not Zurbarán.

Cézanne and America

To the Editors:
In my review of John Rewald's *Cézanne in America* (September 1989), I stated that the book sheds new light on the Armory Show of 1913. This is true, but I meant to write as well that it sheds new light on the 1911 show at Stieglitz's 291 Gallery.

William Agee
New York, NY

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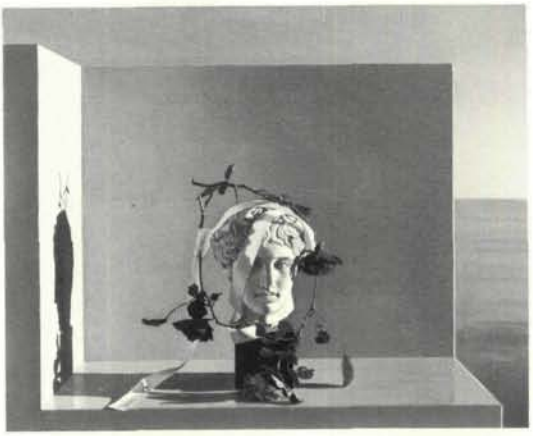

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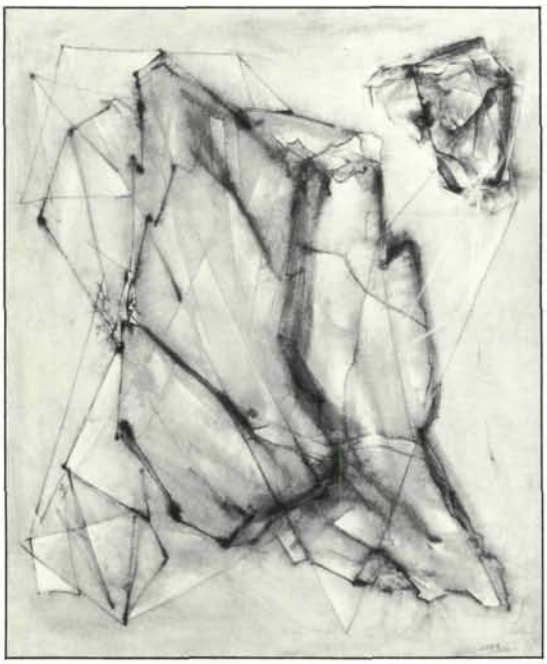

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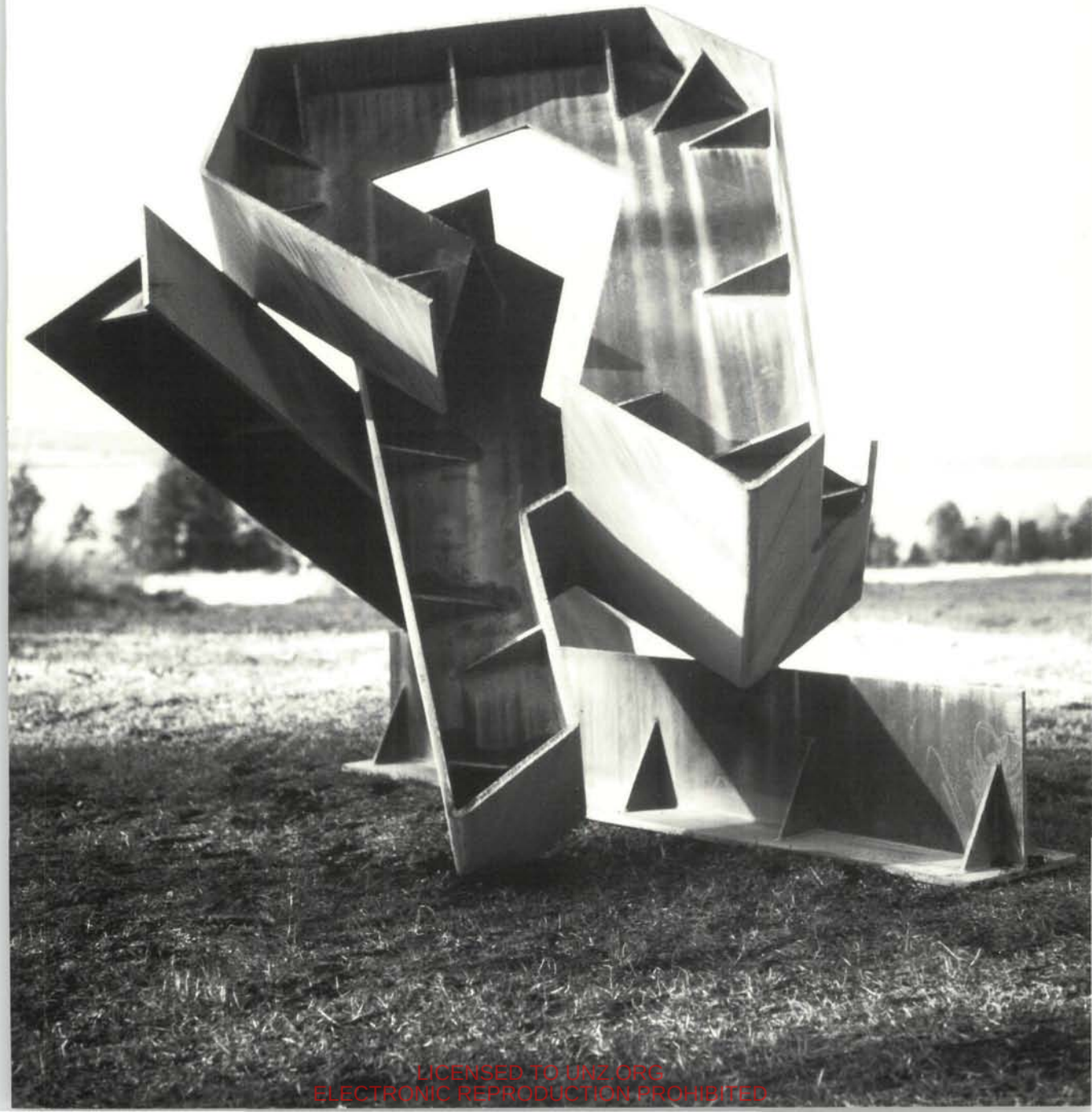

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